

To the chief Musician upon Gittith.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. SING aloud unto God our strength : make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day, 4. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. 6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the ports. 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep, or to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires; work of the day which is to be done in its day. And here,

1. The worshippers of God are excited to their work; and are taught by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, ver. 1, 2, 3. Our errand is to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business. (1.) In doing this we must eye God as our strength, and as the God of Jacob, ver. 1. He is the strength of Israel, as a people, for he is a God in covenant with them, that will powerfully protect, support and deliver them, that fights their battles and makes them to do valiantly and victoriously. He is the strength of every Israelite, by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; and to him as our strength, we must both pray and sing praise to him, as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. (2.) We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the timbrel, harp, and psaltery; and by blowing the trumpet, some think, in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder; it was then, and is now to be done by singing of psalms, singing aloud and making a joyful noise. The pleasantness of the harp and the awfulness of the trumpet, intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud, and making a noise, intimates that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God; that we must with a hearty good-will shew forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him, and obligations to him; and that we should join many together in this work, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. (3.) This must be done in the time appointed: No time amiss for praising God, seven times a day will I praise thee; nay, at midnight will I rise and give thanks unto thee; but some are times appointed, not for God to meet us, he is always ready, but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise, when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing his praises.

2. They are here directed in their work. 1. They must look up to the divine institution, which it is the observation of; in all religious worship we must have an eye to the command, ver. 4. This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them, it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing which we may do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do; it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution, as our warrant and rule; this I do because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me: then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon these operations of divine providence, which it is the memorial of. The solemn service was ordained for a testimony, ver. 5. A standing traditional evidence; for the attesting of the matters of fact: It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done to their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should be ignorant of them and forget them.

1. The psalmist in the people's name puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Israel's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, ver. 5. When God went out against the land of Egypt to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go; then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which perhaps is meant by the solemn feast-day, ver. 3. that was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt, to destroy the first-born, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, Exod. xii. 23, 24. And by it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery in Egypt, that there they heard a language that they understood not, there they were strangers in a strange land; the Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language, for Joseph spake to his brethren by an interpreter, Gen. xlii. 23. and the Egyptians are said to be to the house of Jacob a people of a strange language, Psalm cxiv. 1. To make a deliverance appear the more gracious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear the more grievous.

2. The psalmist in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of the deliverance, here he changeth the person, ver. 6. God speaks by him saying, I removed his shoulder from the burden. Let him remember this on the feast day, (1.) That God had brought them out of the house of bondage; had removed their shoulder from the burden of oppression under which they are ready to sink: had delivered their hands from the pots, or panniers or baskets, in which they carried clay or bricks. Liberty out of slavery is a very sensible mercy, and which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all. (2.) God had delivered them at the Red-sea; then they called in trouble, and he rescued them, and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, Exod. xiv. 10. Then he answered them with a real answer, out of the secret place of thunder, i. e. out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians, and trouble it, Exod. xiv. 25. Or, it may be meant of the giving of the law at mount Sinai; which was the secret place, for it

was death to gaze, Exod. xix. 21. and it was in thunder that God then spake. Even the terrors of Sinai were favours to Israel, Deut. iv. 33 (3.) God had borne their manners in the wilderness; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah, i. e. Thou didst there shew thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee, Selah; mark that; compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now if they on their solemn feast days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we on the Christian sabbath to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage; and the many gracious answers he hath given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9. There shall no strange god be in thee: neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10. I am the LORD thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. 11. But my people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me. 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels. 13. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God by the Psalmist here speaks to Israel, and in them to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

1. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say, ver. 8. Hear, O my people, and who should hear me if my own people will not? I have heard and answered thee, now wilt thou hear me; Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity, and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee. Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, i. e. be advised by me, be ruled by me. Nothing could be more reasonably or more justly expected, and yet God puts an if upon it: if thou wilt hearken unto me. It is thine interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no, for thy neck is an iron sinew.

2. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God and Redeemer, ver. 10. I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; which is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, shewing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder if we be disobedient.

3. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them as the Lord, and their God upon their coming out of Egypt. (1.) The great command was that they should have no other gods before him, ver. 9. There shall no strange god be in thee, none beside thine own God. Other gods might well be called strange gods, for it was very strange, that ever any people, who had the true and living God for their God, should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, Exod. xxiii. 13. (2.) The great promise was, that God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for, Deut. iv. 7. That if they would adhere to him as their powerful protector and ruler, they should always find him their bountiful benefactor. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. See here, (1.) What is our duty; to raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires towards him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him, and therefore why should we be straitened in our own bosoms? (2.) What is God's promise; I will fill thy mouth with good things, Psalm ciii. 5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures, Prov. xiii. 21. to replenish every hungry soul, Jer. xxxi. 25. to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit and never satisfy (Isa. lv. 2.) Divine pleasures will satisfy and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God, if we pray for it in faith; Ask, and it shall be given you; he gives liberally and upbraideth not. God assured his people Israel, that it should be their own fault, if he did not do as great and kind things for them, as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much to give them, if they would but have kept close to God: He would moreover have given them such and such things, 2 Sam. xii. 8.

4. He chargeth them with a high contempt of his authority as their law-giver, and his grace and favour as their benefactor, ver. 11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain, my people would not hearken to my voice, but turned a deaf ear to all I said. Two things he complains of. (1.) Their disobedience to his commands, they did hear his voice, so as never any people did: but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it; neither by the law nor by the reason of it. (2.) Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them, they would none of me. They acquiesced not in my word (so the Chaldee). God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people, they did not like his terms. I would have gathered them but they would not. They had none of him, and why had they not? It was not because they might not, they were fairly invited into covenant with God; it was not because they could not, for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart; but it was purely because they would not: God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his, by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed; Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, let me at short, and would have none of me. Note All the wickedness of the wicked world; is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious, is because they will not be so.

5. He justifies himself with this in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them, ver. 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts, which would be more dangerous enemies, and more mischievous oppressors to them than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do

do as they will: *Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.* It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts lust that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them, for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is debtor to no man, and yet as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it; so he never took it away from any, but such as had first forfeited it. *They would none of me, so I gave them up.* let them take their course and see what follows, they walked in their own counsels, in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eye, both in their worships and in their conversations: I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God, and his advice. God therefore was not the author of their sin, he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts, and the blood upon their own heads.

6. He testifies his good will to them, in wishing they had done well for themselves. he saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts; that is worse than being given up to Satan, that may be in order to reformation, 1 Tim. i. 20. and to salvation. 1 Cor. v. 5. But to be delivered up to our own hearts lusts, is to be sealed under condemnation: He that is filthy let him be filthy still; what fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to? Now here God looks upon them with pity: and shews that it was with reluctance that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate: *How shall I give thee up Ephraim?* Hos. xi. 2, 9. So here, *O that my people had hearkened!* See Isa. xlviii. 18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem, *If thou hadst known,* Luke xix. 41. The expressions here are very affecting, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. designed to shew, (1.) How unwilling God is that any should perish, and desirous that all should come to repentance: He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. (2.) What enemies sinners are to themselves, and what an aggravation it will be of their misery that they might have been happy upon such easy terms.

Observe here, 1. The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them if they had been obedient. (1.) He would have given them victory over their enemies, and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours, ver. 14. *I should have subdued their enemies;* and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing of our enemies. Nor would he have put them to the expence and fatigue of a tedious war, he would soon have done it, for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they had not been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it, and without any difficulty; with the turn of a hand, nay, *with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked,* Isa. xi. 4. If he but turn his hand, the *haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him,* ver. 15. And though they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him, and to confess that he is too hard for them, and it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission. (2.) He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In despite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, their time should have endured for ever, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less envied, and turned out of all possession. (3.) He would have given them great plenty of all good things, ver. 16. *He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat,* with the best grain, and best of the kind. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, and they exported a deal of it, Ezek. xxvii. 17. He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but with *honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them.* Besides the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for bee hives, and in them they should find honey in abundance, see Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

2. The duty God required from them as the condition of all his mercy. He expected no more but that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions; as a servant to his master, to receive his commands: and that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his ordinances, and attend the intimations of his providence; and there was nothing unreasonable in this.

3. Observe, how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty. If they had *hearkened to me, I would soon have subdued their enemies.* Note, National sin and disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national salvation and deliverance. *When I would have healed Israel, and set every thing to rights among them, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered,* and so a stop was put to the cure, Hos. vii. 1. We are apt to say if such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies; but we mistake: If we had hearkened to God, and kept our duty, the thing had been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wisheth it had been otherwise. Note, Therefore God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He therefore delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall.

P S A L M LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes courts and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet it was probably penned primarily for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and others their elders that were in places of power, and perhaps by David's direction. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and to instruct the judges of the earth, as Psalm ii. 10. to tell them their duty, as 2 Sam. xxii. 3. and to tell them of their faults as Psalm lviii. 1. We have here, (1.) The dignity of magistracy, and its dependence upon God, ver. 1. (2.) The duty of magistrates, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, ver. 2-5. (4.) Their doom read, ver. 6, 7. (5.) The desire and prayer of all good people, that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, ver. 8. Though magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding, when we give glory to God in singing of it, as presiding in all public affairs, providing for the protection of injured innocency, and ready to punish the most powerful injustice, and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present Government, and with the hopes of his future judgment.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **G**OD standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. 2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. 5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here,

1. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts, asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects, ver. 1. *God stands as chief director in the congregation of the mighty,* the mighty One (*in cætu fortis*) in the councils of the prince, the supreme magistrate, and he judgeth among the gods of the inferior magistrates: both the legislative and the executive power of princes is under his eye and his hand. Observe here, 1. The power and honour of magistrates; they are the mighty, they are so in authority, for the public good; it is a great power that they are entrusted with, and they ought to be so in wisdom and courage. They are in the Hebrew dialect called gods; the same words is used for the subordinate governors, that is used for the sovereign ruler of the world. They are *Elohim*; angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world: and magistrates in an inferior capacity are likewise the ministers of his providence in general, for the keeping up of order and peace of human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil-doers, and protecting them that do well. Good magistrates that answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them, they are his vicegerents, and great blessings to any people; *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king,* Prov. xvi. 10. But as *roaring lions and raging bears,* so are wicked rulers over the poor people, Prov. xxviii. 15. (2.) A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy like ours; here is the mighty one, the sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the gods. (3.) God's incontestible sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations of the mighty. God stands, he judgeth among them, i. e. they have their power from him, and are accountable to him; *by him kings reign.* He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do, and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with for their mal-administrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them *which way soever he will,* Prov. xxi. 1. So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand whatsoever devices are in men's hearts; he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them, though little doth their hearts think so, *Isa. x. 7.* Let magistrates consider this, and be awed by it, God is with them in the judgment, 2 Chron. xix. 6. Deut. i. 17. Let subjects consider this, and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges that mean well, are under a divine direction, and bad ones that mean never so ill, are under a divine restraint.

2. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to him by whom they are entrusted with it, ver. 3, 4. (1.) They are to be the protectors of those that lie exposed to injury, and the patrons of those that want advice and assistance. Defend the poor that have no money wherewith to make friends, or see counsel. And the fatherless, that while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost all those that would have been the guides of their youth. Magistrates as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it that are fatherless: are called the gods. Herein they must be followers of him, they must be *fathers of the fatherless.* Job was so, Job. xxix. 13. (2.) They are to administer justice impartially, and do right to the *afflicted and needy*, who being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them; and will be in danger of losing all, if magistrates do not *ex officio* interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever those are that contend with him. (3.) They are to rescue those that are already fallen into the hands of oppressors and deliver them, ver. 4. *rid them out of the hand of the wicked, avenge them of their adversary,* Luke xviii. 3. These are clients that there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them, yet these are they whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult, and whose cause they must espouse.

3. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, that neglect their duty and abuse their power, forgetting that God standeth among them, ver. 2. 5. Observe, (1.) What the sin is they are charged with; they judge unjustly, contrary to the rules of equity and the dictates of their consciences; giving judgment against those that have right on their side, out of malice and ill-will; or, for those that have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured, and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun, when he observed *the place of judgment that iniquity was there,* Eccles. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, though that is bad enough: but which is much worse, they accepted the persons of the wicked, because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Wo unto thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these!

(2.) What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor, it was many a time given them in charge, yet they judge unjustly, for *they know not neither will they understand.* They do not care to hear their duty, they will not take pains to study it, they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice; *a gift in secret blinds their eyes.* They know not because they will not understand; none so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do or whither they go. They that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness.

(3.) What was the consequence of this sin, *all the foundations of the earth, or of the land, are out of course;* when justice is perverted, what good can be expected? *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved,* is the psalmist speaks in a like case, Psalm lxxv. 3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

6. I have

6. I have said, Ye are gods: and all of you are children of the most High. 7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. 8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

1. Earthly gods abased and brought down, ver. 6, 7. The dignity of their character is acknowledged, ver. 8. *I have said, Ye are gods.* They have been honoured with the name and title of gods; God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words, *Exod. xxii. 28. Thou shalt not revile the gods.* And if they have this style from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them gods, because *unto them the word of God came*, so our Saviour expounds it, *John x. 35. i. e.* they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shield of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, *Rom. xiii. 4.* All of them are in this sense *children of the most High.* God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or because, *I said, Ye are gods*, you have carried the honour further than was intended, and have imagined yourselves to be the children of the most High, as the king of Babylon, *Isa. xiv. 14. I will be like the most High*, and the king of Tyre, *Ezek. xxviii. 2. Thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God.* It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration, *ye shall die like men.* This may be taken either, (1.) As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their mis-rules put the foundations of the earth out of course; God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes, and their being Israelites shall not secure them, no more than their being judges; or like one of the angels that sinned; or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time, *Job xxxiv. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others.* Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them, for wherein they deal proudly, he will *show himself above them.* Or, (2.) As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world; let them not be puffed up with their honour, or neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality be both mortifying to their pride and quickening to their duty. Ye are called gods, but ye have no patent for immortality, *ye shall die like men*, like common men, and like one of them, *ye, O princes, shall fall.* Note, Kings and princes, old judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sepulchro quibus æquat.*

2. The God of heaven exalted and raised high, ver. 8. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors, they turned a deaf ear to all he said, and walked on in darkness; and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to *take unto himself his great power*; *Arise, O God, judge the earth*; and when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it; *thou shalt inherit all nations.* This has respect, (1.) To the kingdom of providence; God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleaseth, he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man doth of his inheritance; this we are to believe and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, *Job ix. 24.* But God has reserved the power to himself, and over-rules them. In this faith we must pray, *Arise, O God, judge the earth*, appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thine own heart. There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. (2.) It has respect to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall *give him the heathen for his inheritance.* Thou, O Christ, shall inherit all nations, and be the governor over them, *Psalm ii. 8. —xxii. 28.* Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another, in reference to the mismanagements of power among men, one is, *Rev. xix. 6. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*; the other is, *Rev. xxii. 20. Surely, I come quickly.*

PSALM LXXXIII.

This Psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph. It is penned, as most of those, upon a public account, with reference to the insults of the church's enemies, that sought its ruin; some think it was penned upon the occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah in Jehoshaphat's time, by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of, ver. 8. who were at the head of the alliance, and to whom all the other states here mentioned were auxiliaries: We have the story, 3 Chron. xx. 1. where it is said, *The children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land.* Others think, it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the neighbour nations against Israel from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, (1.) To God's knowledge, by a remonstrance of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, ver. 1—8. (2.) To God's justice and jealousy, both, for his church, and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled; and God glorified, ver. 9—18. This in the singing of it we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all anti-christian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in hopes that all their projects will be baffled, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A SONG OF PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **K**EEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God: 2. For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee, have lifted up the head. 3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against

thy hidden ones. 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee. 6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites: of Moab, and the Hagarenes, 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre. 8. Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God was now in danger and fear, and great distress; and yet their prayer is called, *A song or psalm*, for singing psalms is not unreasonable; no not when the harps are hung upon the willow trees.

1. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people, ver. 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God*, but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong. Thus Jeh. Asaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion, 2 Chron. xx. 11. *Behold how they reward us, to come to cast us of thy possession.* Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people, he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it, or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality, and let them fight it; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by as a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save. Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, *Keep not thou silence, O God.* Lord, speak to us by thy prophets for our encouragement against our fears, as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 Chron. xx. 14. Lord, speak for us by thy providence and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us, and disappointment to them. God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

2. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbour nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of.

Now observe where;

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed, it is against the Israel of God, and so in effect against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting, but that if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it to appear he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; for who then could be against them? Lord, saith he, they are thine enemies, and they hate thee. All wicked people are God's enemies, the carnal mind is *enmity against God*, but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion, and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them, that they fought against God, *they are confederates against thee*, ver. 5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it, but when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, *Help, Lord; Keep not thou silent, O God.* He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his Son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me, that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and ruin my estate; Lord, saith the psalmist, they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones. Note, God's people are his hidden ones; hid, (1.) In respect of secrecy: their life is *hid with Christ in God*, the world knows them not, if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. (2.) In respect of safety; God takes them under his special protection hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power, and promise to secure to his people, they will consult to ruin them, and cast them down from their excellency, Psalm lxii. 4. and to make a prey of those whom the Lord hath set apart for himself, Psalm iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed; the devil is at the bottom of it and therefore it is carried on, (1.) With a great deal of heat and violence; thine enemies make a tumult, ver. 2. the heathen rage, Psalm ii. 1. the nations are angry, Rev. xi. 18. They are noisy in their clamours against the people whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies; this comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: The enemies talk big, and much, Lord, let not them talk at all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath, Psalm ii. 5. (2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence; they have lifted up the head, in confidence of their success, they are so elevated as if they could overtop the most High, and overpower the Almighty. (3.) With a great deal of art and policy: they have taken crafty counsel, ver. 3. The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive by all possible means, though never so base, never so bad, to gain their point. They are profound to make slaughter, Hos. v. 2. as if they could out-wit infinite wisdom. (4.) With a great deal of unanimity whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God they consult with one consent, ver. 5. nor is Satan's kingdom divided against itself. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, their hearts too, *Fas est & ab hoste doceri.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? and shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interest? if Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What is it that is aimed at in this confederacy? they consulted not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which had been their wisdom: they consult not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms; not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, to prevent their power from growing exorbitant: This will not serve; it is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that is designed, ver. 4. *Come, let us cut them off from being a nation*, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan: let us leave neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste, that the name of Israel may be in no more remembrance, no, not in history; for with them they would destroy their bibles, and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman: It is the secret wish of wicked men that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind; having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it, all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it cut off; thus they would bring it to if it were in their power; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them.

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy; the nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned, ver. 6, 7, 8. the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van, for the apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness

witnefs Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance againft Israel. There are no bonds of nature fo ftrong, but the fpirit of perfecution has broke through them: *The brother fhall betray the brother to death*. Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot, but as an impious, fo a degenerate race. The Philiftines were long a thorn in Israel's fide, and very vexatious; but how the inhabitants of Tyre, who in David's time were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not, but that Affyr, i.e. the Affyrian, alfo is joined with them, is not ftrange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; *Lord, how are they increafed that trouble it!* God's heritage was as a fpeckled bird, all the birds round about were againft her, Jer. xii. 9. which highly magnifies the power of God in preferring to himfelf a church in the world in defiance of the combined force of earth and hell.

9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites: as to Sifera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kifon: 10. Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zeba, and as Zalmunna: 12. Who faid, Let us take to ourfelves the houfes of God in poffeffion. 13. O my God make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind. 14. As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame fetteth the mountains on fire; 15. So perfecute them with thy tempeft, and make them afraid with thy ftorm. 16. Fill their faces with fhame: that they may feek thy name, O LORD. 17. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to fhame and perift: 18. That men may know, that thou whofe name alone is JEHOVAH, art the moft high over all the earth.

The pfalmift here in the name of the church, prays for the deftruction of thofe confederate forces, and in God's name foretells it; for this prayer that it might be fo, amounts to a prophecy that it fhall be fo; and this prophecy reacheth to all the enemies of the gofpel church; whoever they be that oppofe the kingdom of Chrift, here they may read their doom.

The prayer is in fhort, that thofe enemies that were confederate againft Ifrael, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and fo God's Ifrael might be preferved and perpetuated. Now, this is here illuftrated,

1. By fome precedents; let that be their punifhment which has been the fate of others, who have formerly fet themfelves againft God's Ifrael. The defeat and difcomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope; becaufe God is the fame ftill that ever he was, the fame to his people, and the fame againft his and their enemies; with him is no variablenefs.

(1.) He prays, that their armies might be deftroyed as the armies of former enemies hath been, ver. 9, 10. *Do to them as to the Midianites*; let them be routed by their own fears; for fo the Midianites were more than by Gideon's three hundred men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sifera, who was general under Jabin, king of Canaan, which God difcomfited, *Judg. iv. 15.* at the brook Kifon, near to which was Endor; they became as dung on the earth, their dead bodies were thrown like dung laid in heaps, or fpread to fatten the ground, they were trodden to dirt by Barak's fmall but victorious army; and this was ftily made a precedent here, becaufe Deborah made it fo to after-times when it was fresh, *Judg. v. 31. So let all thine enemies perift, O Lord*, that is, fo they fhall perift.

(2.) He prays that their leaders might be deftroyed as they had been formerly; the common people would not have been fo mifchievous if their princes had not fet them on, and therefore they are particularly prayed againft, ver. 11, 12. Obferve, (1.) What their malice was againft the Ifrael of God, they faid, *Let us take to ourfelves, the houfes of God in poffeffion*, ver. 12. The pleafant places of God, fo the word is, by which we may underftand the land of Canaan, which was a pleafant land, and was Immanuel's land; or, the temple, which was indeed God's pleafant place, *Ifa. lxiv. 11.* (Or, as Dr. Hammond fuggelts) the pleafant paffures which thefe Arabians who traded in cattle, did in a particular manner court. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themfelves by this war; and their armies muft be made as dung for the earth to ferve their covetoufnefs and their ambition. (2.) What their lot fhould be; they fhall be made like Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites and flain, *Judg. vii. 25.* and like Zeeba and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himfelf flew, *Judg. viii. 21.* Let thofe enemies of ours be made as eafy a prey to us, as they were to the conquerors then. We may not prefcribe to God, but we may pray to God, that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days, as he did with thofe in the days of our fathers.

2. He illuftrates it by fome fimilitudes, and prays,

(1.) That God would make them like a wheel, ver. 13. that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unfettled, and giddy in all their counfels and refolves; that they might roll down eafily and fpeedily to their own ruin. Or, as fome think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out by the wheel which was then ufed in thrufhing. Thus when a wife king *fhattered the wicked*, he is faid to *bring the wheel over them*, *Prov. xx. 26.* They that truft in God have their hearts fixed, they that fight againft him are unfixed, like a wheel.

(2.) That they might be chafed as stubble, or chaff before the fierce wind. The wheel, though it continually turn round, yet is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no more fixation than the light stubble which the wind hurries away, and nobody defires to fave it, but is willing it fhould go, *Pfalms i. 4.* Thus fhall the wicked be driven away in his wickednefs, and chafed out of the world.

(3.) That they might be confumed as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains by the flames, ver. 14. when the stubble is driven by the wind, yet it will refit at laft under fome hedge, in fome ditch or other: But he prays, that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, *Heb. vi. 8.* and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The reddition of thefe comparifons we have; ver. 15. *So perfecute them with thy tempeft*, perfecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy ftorm. See how finners are made miserable; the ftorm of God's wrath raifeth terrors in their own hearts, and fo they are made completely miserable. God can deal with the proudeft and moft daring finner that has bit defiance to his juftice, and can make him afraid as a grafs-hopper. It is the torment of the devils, that they tremble.

3. He illuftrates it by the good confequences of their confufion, ver. 16,

17, 18. He prays here that God having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with fhame, that they might be afhamed of their enmity to the people of God. *Ifa. xxvi. 11.* afhamed of their folly in acting both againft Omnipotence itfelf, and their own true intereft. They did what they could to put God's people to fhame, but the fhame will at long-run return upon themfelves.

Now, 1. The beginning of this fhame might be a means of their conversion; let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, *that they may feek thy name, O Lord*. Let them lie put to a ftand, that they may have both leifure and reafon to pauze a little, and confider who it is that they are fighting againft, and what an unequal match they are for him, and may therefore humble and fubmit themfelves, and defire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to feek thy name. Note, That which we fhould earneftly defire and beg of God for our enemies and perfecutors, is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we fhould defire their abatement in order to this; no other confufion to them, but what may be a ftap towards their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God; if they will not be afhamed and repent, let them be put to fhame and perift; if they will not be troubled and turned, which would foon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, *let them be troubled for ever*, and never have peace: And this will be for God's glory, ver. 18. That other men may know and own, if they themfelves will not, *that thou whofe name alone is JEHOVAH*, (that incommunicable, though not ineffable name) *art the moft high over all the earth*. God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies, will be inconteftable proofs, (1.) That he is according to his name Jehovah, a felf-existent, felf-fufficient being, that has all power and perfection in himfelf. (2.) That he is the moft high God, fovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themfelves, and pretend to be high. (3.) That he is fo not only over the land of Ifrael, but over all the earth; even thofe nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom ruleth over all. Thefe are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be perfuaded to know and believe them; therefore the Pfalmift pray that the deftruction of fome might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies in the great day, will be the effectual proof of this before angels and men; when the everlafting fhame and contempt to which finners fhall rife, *Dan. xii. 2.* fhall redound to the everlafting honour and praife of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

P S A L M LXXXIV.

Though David's name be not in the title of the pfalm, yet we have reafon to think he was the penman of it, becaufe it breathed fo much of his excellent fpirit, and is fo like to the fixty-third pfalm, which was penned by him; it is fuppofed that David penned this pfalm when he was forced by Abfalom's rebellion to quit his city, which he lamented his abfence from, not fo much becaufe it was the royal city, as becaufe it was the holy city, witnefs this pfalm, which contains the pious breathings of a gracious foul after God, and communion with him. Though it be not entitled, yet it may be ftily looked upon as a pfalm or fong for the fabbath day, the day of our folemn affemblies. The pfalmift here with great devotion expreffeth his affection, (1.) To the ordinances of God; his value for them, ver. 1. defire towards them, ver. 2, 3. His conviction of the happinefs of thofe that did enjoy them, ver. 4-7. And his placing his own happinefs fo very much in the enjoyment of them, ver. 10. (2.) To the God of the ordinances; his defire towards him, ver. 8, 9. His faith in him, ver. 11. And his conviction of the happinefs of thofe that put their confidence in him, ver. 12. In finging this pfalm, we fhould have the fame devout affections working towards God that David had, and then the finging of it will be very pleafant.

¶ To the chief mufician upon Gittith, a Pfalm for the fons of Korah.

1. **H**OW amiable are thy tabernacles O LORD of hofts! 2. My foul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flefh crieth out for the living God. 3. Yea, the fparrow hath found an houfe, and the fwallow a neft for herfelf, where fhe may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hofts, my King and my God. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy houfe: they will be ftill praifing thee. Selah. 5. Blessed is the man whofe ftrength is in thee: in whofe heart are the ways of them. 6. Who paffing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain alfo filleth the pools. 7. They go from ftrength to ftrength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The Pfalmift here being by force reftained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more fenfible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Obferve,

1. The wonderful beauty he faw in holy institutions, ver. 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hofts!* Some think, he here calls God the Lord of hofts, i.e. in a fpecial manner of the angels, the heavenly hofts, becaufe of the prefence of the angels in God's fanctuary: they attended the Shechinah and were (as fome think) fignified by the cherubim; God is the Lord of thefe hofts, and his the tabernacle is: It is fpoken of as more than one (thy tabernacles) becaufe there were divers courts in which the people attended, and becaufe the tabernacle itfelf confifted of a holy place, and a moft holy. How amiable are thefe! how lovely is the fanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly fanctified! Gracious fouls fee a wonderful inexpressible beauty in holinefs, and holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the difadvantage of external circumftances makes holy ordinances not at all the lefs amiable, for the beauty of holinefs is fpiritual and their glory is within.

2. The longing defire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, ver. 2. It was an entire defire, body, foul, and fpirit concurred in it, he was not confcious to himfelf of any rifing thought to the contrary; it was an intense defire; it was like the defire of the ambitious or covetous, or epicure. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be reftored to his place in God's courts, and almoft impatient of delay. Yet it was not fo much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out in prayer for the living God himfelf. O that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him!

1 John i. 3. Ordinances are empty things, if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

3. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars, *ver. 3.* This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affections to God's altars. *The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself:* These little birds by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose, and in which to lay their young; some such David supposeth there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wished himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars, than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for *the wings of a dove*, on which to *fly into the wilderness*, Psalm iv. 6. Here for the wings of a sparrow, that he may fly undiscovered into God's courts; and though to *watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top*, is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit, Psalm cii. 7. yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars: It is better to be serving God in solitude, than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps when in David's time music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the army, they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle (for we find the singing of birds taken notice of to the glory of God, Psalm civ. 12.) and David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there; David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night, but let this be his rest, his home, here he will dwell: And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but there they lay their young; for those that have a place in God's courts themselves, cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's house, and within his walls, a place and a name, that they may *feed their kids beside the shepherds tents*. Some give another sense of this verse: Lord, by the providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse; but thine altar, which is my nest, my resting place, which I am desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? *As a bird that wanders from her nest*, so am I, now I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place, *Prov. xxvii. 8.* I shall never be easy till I return to my place again. Note, They whose souls are at home, at rest in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense, and David in his desire of a place in God's courts has an eye to both, as we also must in all our attendance on God have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ. And lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address, thou art the *Lord of hosts, my King, and my God*. Where should a poor distressed subject seek for protection but with his king? *And should not a people seek unto their God?* my King, my God is Lord of hosts, by him and his altars let me live and die.

4. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars: *Blessed are they, O when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?*

1. Blessed are the ministers; the priests and Levites that have their residence about the tabernacle, and are in their courses employed in the service of it. *Ver. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house*, that are at home there, and whose business lies there: He is so far from pitying them as confined to a constant attendance, and obliged to a perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world: There are those that bless the covetous, but he blessed the religious: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house*, not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work they will be still praising thee; and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continual praising him. Apply this to his house above, blessed are they that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they *rest not day or night from praising God*. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work, in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country, who though they do not constantly dwell in God's house as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance, *Deut. xvi. 16.* David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those that might thus attend, *ver. 5; 6, 7.*

Those whom he pronounceth blessed are here described.

1. They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God, and devotedness to him. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee*, i. e. that makes thee his strength, and strongly stays himself upon thee; that makes thy name his strong tower into which he runs for safety, *Prov. xviii. 10. Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God*, Psalm xl. 4.—cxvi. 5. Those are truly happy who go forth, and go on in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, for then the work is sure to miscarry, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacle again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering.

2. They are such as have a dear love for holy ordinances, in whose hearts are the ways of them, i. e. that having placed their happiness in God as their end, rejoice in all their ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened, and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts, there is no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those that have the new Jerusalem in their eye, must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's word our rule, and walk by it.

3. They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, *ver. 6.* When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts, their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley, (so some) in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment. When they make the pools, the rain of heaven fills them: If we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times: their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is, as others understand it many a water valley, which in wet weather, when the rain filled the pools, either through the rising of the waters or the distinctness of the way, were un-

passable; but by training and trenching them, they made a road through them for the benefit of those that went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to shew, (1.) That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make those an excuse for staying at home. Difficulties in the way of our duty are designed to try our resolution, and *he that observes the wind shall not sow*. (2.) That they made the best of their way to Zion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and what inconveniences could not be removed, they bore them as well as they could. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that way may be made as well if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

4. They are such as are still pressing forward, till they come to their journey's end at length, and do not take up short of it, *ver. 7. They go from strength to strength*, i. e. their company increaseth by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous; those that were near staid till those that were further off called on them, saying, *Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord*, Psalm cxxii. 1, 2. That they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or, the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey, and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem, the more lively and cheerful they were, and so went *stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 8. Thus it is promised, that they that *wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, Isa. xl. 31. Even where they are weak, there they were strong. They go from virtue to virtue, (so some) it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman, they that press forward in their christian course shall find God adding grace to their graces, *John i. 16.* They shall be changed from glory to glory, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* from one degree of glorious grace to another; till at length every one of them appears before God in Zion, to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. Note, They that grow in grace, shall at last be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, *They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion*. We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; which if we do, the benefit of it will appear to God's glory, and our own everlasting comfort.

8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9. Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Here, 1. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him; he needed to say no more, when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God which now he was restrained and banished from, all his desire was in that profession plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning was not hid from him; therefore he prays, *ver. 8, 9.* only that God would hear his prayer, and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had towards God's courts; he calls himself (as many think) God's anointed, for so David was anointed by him, and anointed for him. In this petition, (1.) He has an eye to God, under several of his glorious titles. As the Lord God of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth; as the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with his own people, a God that never said to the praying seed of Jacob, *seek ye me in vain*. And as God our shield, that takes his people under his special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father, *Gen. xv. 1. Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield*. When David could not be hid in the secret of God's tabernacle, *Psalm xxii. 5.* being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield, ready to him wherever he was. (2.) He has an eye to the Mediator, for of him I rather understand those words, *look upon the face of thy Messiah*, thine anointed One; for of his anointing David spoke, *Psalm xlv. 7.* In all our addresses to God we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well pleased with us in him; we must look with an eye of faith, and then God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the Anointed, who does shew his face, when we without him dare not shew ours.

2. He pleads his love to God's ordinances, and his dependance upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, *ver. 10.* A very dear love he had for holy ordinances, he valued them above any thing else, and he expresseth his value for them, (1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time. A day spent in thy courts, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, is better than a thousand, not than a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in the world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men: Better than a thousand, he does not say days, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set hand to it. A day in thy courts, a sabbath-day, a holy-day, a feast-day though but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay, (as some of the rabbins paraphrase it) though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall with its pleasure *chase a thousand*, and *two put ten thousand to flight*, to shame, as is not worthy to be compared. (2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place; *I had rather be a door-keeper*, rather be in the meanest place and office in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness. Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than a palace, and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant interest he had in God as his God; was the sweet string on which he loved dearly to be harping; they and they only, that can upon good ground call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns; rather lie at the threshold, so the word is; that was the beggar's place, *Acts iii. 2.* No matter (saith David) let that be my place rather than none: The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there,

there, *Matt. xxiii. 6.* that they might make a figure; holy David is not solicitous about that, if he may be admitted to the threshold, he will say, *Matt. x. 10.* *It is good to be here.* Some read it, *I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than to live at liberty in the tents of wickedness,* alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free were to have their ear bored to the door-post, *Exod. xxi. 5, 6.* David loved his master and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, *ver. 11.* See (1.) What God is and will be to his people. *The Lord God is a sun and shield;* we are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a sun to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us! we are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us, *with his favour he will compass us, as with a shield.* Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good, and a shield to shelter us from all evil. (2.) What he doth and will bestow upon them. *The Lord will give grace and glory.* Grace signifies both the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace: both are God's gift, his free gift. And as on the one hand, wherever God gives grace he will give glory, for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it, so on the other hand he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he doth not give grace now, or that receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that *no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly.* It is the character of all good people, that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold *no good from them;* this is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world; make sure grace and glory, and *other things shall be added;* this is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that whatever they desire, and think they need they may be sure that either infinite wisdom sees it is not good for them, or infinite goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly. He pronounceth them blessed that put their confidence in God as he did, *ver. 12.* They are blessed that have the liberty of ordinances, and the privileges of God's house: But though we should be debarred from them, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

P S A L M LXXXV.

*Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of. And nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then, as well as Psalm cxxxvii. They are the public interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge, above were clouds, below were waves, every thing was dark and dismal; the church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear; Being so, (1.) Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions are, against sin and wrath, *ver. 4.* and for mercy and grace, *ver. 7.* The pleas are taken from former favours, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* and present distresses, *ver. 5, 6.* (2.) Here is the dove returning with an olive branch of peace and good tidings: the psalmist expects her return, *ver. 8.* and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which by the spirit of prophecy he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith he took the assurance of to himself, *ver. 9—13.* In singing this psalm, we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general, and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires; the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.*

1 To the Chief Musician.

A PSALM FOR THE SONS OF KORAH.

1. **L**ORD thou hast been favourable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. 4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations. 6. Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? 7. Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

The church in affliction and distress is here, by direction from God, making her application to God; so ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people, that by his Spirit in the word, in the heart, he indites their petitions, and puts words into their mouths. The people of God in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

1. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* Thou hast done so and so for us and our fathers. Note, The sense of present affliction should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but even then when we are brought very low we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of with thankfulness to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure. (1.) That God had shewed himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own; *Thou hast been favourable to thy land,* as

thine with distinguishing favours. Note, The favour of God is the spring head of all good, and the fountain of happiness to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan, *Psalm xlv. 3.* And if he had not continued very favourable to them, they had been ruined many a time. (2.) That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies, and restored them to their liberty; *Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob,* and settled those in their own land again, that had been driven out and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors. The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long will be brought back in due time. (3.) That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations, *ver. 2.* *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,* and not punished them as in justice thou mightest. *Thou hast covered all their sin:* When God forgives sin he covers it, and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. (4.) That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long as they had reason to fear, *ver. 3.* having covered *all their sin,* thou hast taken away *all thy wrath;* for when sin is set aside, God's anger ceaseth; God is pacified, if we are purified. See what the pardon of sin is, *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,* that is, *Thou hast turned thine anger from punishing us,* so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath, but when an intercessor hath stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned away thine anger.

2. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former; Thou hast done well for our fathers, do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant. (1.) They pray for converting grace, *Turn us, O God of our salvation;* in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned; all those whom God will save, sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation. (2.) They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under; *cause thine anger towards us to cease,* as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them. Observe the method, First, turn us to thee, and then cause thine anger to turn from us. When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. (3.) They pray for the manifestation of God's good will to them, *ver. 7.* *Shew us thy mercy, O Lord;* i. e. shew thyself merciful to us, not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us. (4.) They pray, that God would, graciously to them and gloriously to himself appear on their behalf; *Grant us thy salvation:* grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt thou wilt work it by thy providence. Note, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation: he shews mercy to those, to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of meer mercy.

3. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, *ver. 5, 6.* Where observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate; *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?* We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. *Wilt thou draw out thine anger unto all generations?* No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to shew mercy, and wilt not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impertinent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a hell upon earth be the lot of thy people. 1. What they desire and hope for; *Wilt thou not revive us again?* *ver. 6.* revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us; Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again? God had granted to the children of the captivity *some reviving in their bondage,* *Ezra ix. 8.* Their return out of Babylon was as *life from the dead,* *Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12.* Now, Lord, (say they) *Wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in; Isa. xi. 11.* *Psalm cxxvi. 1, 4.* *Revive thy work in the midst of the years,* *Hab. iii. 2.* Revive us again, (1.) That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of it, *Psalm xiv. 7.* Give them life, that they may have joy. (2.) That they may rejoice in thee, and so thou wilt have the glory of it. If God be the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the centre of all our joys.

8. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him: that glory may dwell in our land. 10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11. Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12. Yea the LORD shall give that which is good: and our land shall yield her increase. 13. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and expostulations in the foregoing verses.

1. In general, it is answer of Peace: this the psalmist is soon aware of, *ver. 8.* for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God would say unto him, as the prophet, *Hab. ii. 1, 2.* *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* This intimates (1.) The stilling of his passions, his grief, his fear, and the tumult of his spirit which these occasioned; compose thyself, O my soul in an humble silence to attend upon God, and wait his motions. I have spoken enough or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will; *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* If he would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he saith to us by his word. (2.) *The raising of his expectation:* Now, he has been at prayer, he looks for something very great and very kind from the God that hears prayers. When we have prayed, we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now, observe here, (1.) What it is that he promiseth himself from God in answer to his prayer. *He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints.* There is a people in the world that are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and that shall be saved by him; All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace when without are fightings, and within are fears; but sooner or later God will speak to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit, which he has spoken to their ears.

ears by his word and ministers, and making them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) What use he makes of this expectation. (1.) He takes the comfort of it; and so must we: *I will hear what God the Lord will speak*, hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer. When God speaks peace, we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. (2.) He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for; *but let them not turn again to folly*; for it is on those terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected. To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but if they return to it again, it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin, after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God hath spoken peace, God is for peace, but when he speaks, such are for war.

2. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace; he doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the five last verses of the psalm, which describe the peace and prosperity that God at length blessed the children of the captivity with, when after a great deal of toil and toils, at length they gained a settlement in their own land. But it may be taken, (1.) As a promise also to all that fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy, they shall be happy. (2.) As a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

1. Help at hand, *ver. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh*, nigh to us, nigher than we think it is, it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time is come, and that time is not far off; when the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh, to all that fear him, when trouble is nigh, salvation is nigh: for God is a very present help in time of trouble to all that are his; whereas *salvation is far from the wicked*, Psalm cxix. This may fitly be applied to Christ the author of eternal salvation: it was the comfort of the Old Testament saints, that though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem, which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome to all that fear God.

2. Honour secured; that *glory may dwell in our land*, i. e. that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, I-habod, the glory is departed; when that stays, glory dwells. This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt among them, *John i. 4. for which reason their land is called Immanuel's land*, Isaiah viii. 8.

3. Graces meeting and happily embracing, *ver. 10, 11. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other*. This may be understood, (1.) Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable; when there is no truth nor mercy, all goes to ruin, *Hos. iv. 1. Isa. lix. 14, 15*. But when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness, that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congress mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people. (2.) Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it thereupon. When a people return to God, and adhere to him in a way of duty, he will return to them and abide with them in a way of mercy. So some understand this, man's truth, and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace meet together. If God finds us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful; if we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace. If *truth spring out of the earth*, i. e. (as Dr. Hammond expounds it) out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness, i. e. God's mercy, shall look down from heaven, as the sun doth upon the world, when it sheds its influences on the productions of the earth and cheriseth them. (3.) Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertakings. In him who is both our salvation and our glory. *Mercy and truth are met together*, God's mercy and truth, and his righteousness and peace have kissed each other; i. e. the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners, and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ, as mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance: through him *truth springs out of the earth*, that truth which God desires in the inward part; and then *righteousness looks down from heaven*, for God is just, and the justifier of them which believe in Jesus: or it may note, that in the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail, and have an universal command.

4. Great plenty of every thing desirable, *ver. 12. The Lord shall give that which is good*, i. e. every thing that he sees to be good for us; all good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected; if we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added; *Matt. vii. 33*. When the glory of the gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for soul prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it, or sweeten the want of it. See *Psalm lxxvii. 6*.

5. A sure conduct in the good way, *ver. 13. The righteousness of his promise which he hath made to us*, assuring us of happiness, the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour, and to qualify us for it; and this shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, i. e. to encourage our hopes, and guide our practice, that we may go forth to meet him, when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ the Son of righteousness shall bring us to God, and puts us into the way that leads to him; John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness shall go before Christ to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God, and in following him.

P S A L M LXXXVI.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of David; probably it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, who in the days of his flesh offered up strong cries, *Heb. v. 7. David in this prayer (according to the nature of that duty), (1.) Gives glory to God, ver. 8, 9, 10—12, 13. (2.) Seeks for grace and favour from God; that God would hear his prayers, ver. 1—6, 7. Preserve and save him, and be merciful to him, ver. 2, 3—16. that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, ver. 4—11—17.*

He pleads God's goodness, *ver. 5—15. and the malice of his enemies, ver. 14. In singing this we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.*

A PRAYER OF DAVID.

1. **B**OW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. 2. Preserve my soul, for I am holy: O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3. Be merciful unto me, O LORD: for I cry unto thee daily. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 5. For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer: and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of a prayer of David; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers: for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.

Now here we may observe,

1. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described, *ver. 4. Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*, as he had said, *Psalm xxv. 1*. In all the parts of prayer, the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation raised very high of great things from him.

(1.) He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers, *ver. 11. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me*. When God hears our prayers it is fitly said, that he bows down his ear to them, for it is admirable condescension in God, that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are, and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again, *ver. 6. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer*, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered, attend to the voice of my supplications: Not that God needs to have his affection stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The son of David spake it with assurance and pleasure, *John xi. 41, 42. Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me: and I know that thou hearest me always*.

(2.) He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the author of his salvation, *ver. 2. Preserve my soul, save thy servant*. It was David's soul that was God's servant, for those only serve God acceptably that serve him with their spirits. David's concern is about his soul; if we understand of his natural life, it teaches us, that the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping, and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life; the life of the soul as distinct from the body; preserve my soul, from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, and that is sin. Preserve my soul and to save me: all those whom God will save he doth preserve and will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.

(3.) He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity, and compassion, *ver. 3. Be merciful to me, O Lord*. It is mercy in God to pardon our sins, and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, *God be merciful to me*. Men shew no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, Lord, for mercy sake, be merciful unto me.

(4.) He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort, *ver. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant*. It is God only that can put gladness into the heart, and make the soul to rejoice, and then, and not till then, the joy is full: and those that are God's servants, as it is their duty to serve him with gladness, so it is their privilege to be filled with joy and peace in believing; and they may in faith pray not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will rejoice their souls, and the joy of the Lord will be their strength. Observe when he prays, *rejoice my soul*, he adds, *for unto thee do I lift up my soul*. Then we may expect comfort from God, when we take care to keep up our communion with God: prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

2. The pleas with which he enforceth these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him. Thou art my God to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant, *(ver. 2.)* in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee.

2. He pleads distress; *Hear me, for I am poor and needy*, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me. God is the poor man's king, whose glory it is to save the souls of the needy: they are poor in spirit, that see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him, *ver. 5. To thee do I lift up my soul in desire and expectation; for thou, Lord, art good*, and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all our addresses to him. His goodness appears in two things, giving, and forgiving. (1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is ready to forgive; more ready to forgive than we are to repent. *I said I will confess, and thou forgavest*, Psalm xxxiii. 5. (2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plenteous in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal, unto all them that call upon him; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs, and is open-handed in granting that supply.

4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were brought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as earnest of all good.

1. A conformity to God, *ver. 2. I am holy*, therefore preserve my soul; for those whom the spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He doth not say this in pride and vain glory, but with humble thankfulness to God; *I am one whom thou favourest*, so the margin reads it, whom thou hast set apart for thyself; if God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that the time was a time of love; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour; and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. All his saints are in thy hand, *Deut. xxxiii. 3*. Observe, *I am needy*, *ver. 1. yet I am holy*, *ver. 2. Holy and yet needy; poor in the world, but rich in faith*. And those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty, may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

2. A confidence in God; *for thy servant that trusteth in thee.* They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

3. A disposition to communion with God; he hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. (1.) To be constant in prayer; *I cry unto thee daily, and all the day,* ver. 3. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. (2.) To be inward with God in prayer; *to lift up his soul to him,* ver. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. (3.) To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction. ver. 7. *In the day of my trouble,* whatever others do, *I will call upon thee,* and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, *O Baal, hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded,* 1 Kings xviii. 29.

8. Among the gods *there is none like unto thee, O LORD,* neither *are there any works like unto thy works.* 9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O LORD: and shall glorify thy name. 10. For thou art great, and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12. I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul: and have not set thee before them. 15. But thou, O LORD, art a God full of compassion, and gracious: long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. 17. Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

1. He gives glory to God: for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

(1.) As being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, ver. 8. Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, *there is none like unto thee, O Lord;* none so wise, so mighty, so good; *neither are there any works like unto thy works;* which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him, is by acknowledging that there is none like him.

(2.) As the fountain of all being, and the center of all praise, ver. 9. *Thou hast made all nations,* made them all of one blood, they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore *they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name.* This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Rev. vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa. lxvi. 23.

(3.) As a being infinitely great, ver. 10. Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as *King of nations* thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestible, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, *thou dost wondrous things,* which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none beside thee. Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admirings of this God that doth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts who is God alone.

(4.) As a being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile, ver. 11. no mercy is to be expected from him, *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious,* ver. 15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him *mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger, and he is *plenteous in mercy and truth,* as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

(5.) As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly, when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist harps upon with most pleasure, ver. 12, 13. He had said, ver. 9. *All nations shall praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name.* It is some satisfaction to a good man to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. Whatever others do (saith David) *I will praise thee, O Lord my God,* not only as the Lord, but as my God. And I will do it with all mine heart, i. e. I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for *I will glorify thy name,* not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live and hope to be doing it to eternity. And with good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shewed him particular favours. *For great is thy mercy towards me.* The fountain of mercy is in exhaustible full, the streams of mercy are infinitely rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it. *Great is thy mercy towards me.* Of the greatness of God's mercy; he gives this instance, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest*

hell: from death; from so great a death, as St. Paul, 2 Cor. i. 10. from eternal death. So even some of the Jewish writers understand it; David knew he deserved to have been cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him, the Lord had *taken away his sin;* and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and herein God's mercy was great towards him. Even the best saints owe it not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell: and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

3. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. No complaints of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him, ver. 14. Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me; then takes notice of their character, they are proud men that looked with disdain upon poor David: many are made persecutors by their pride. They are violent men, that will carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they are terrible, formidable men; (so some) that do what they can to frighten all about them. Their number, there are assemblies of them, they were men in authority, and met in councils and courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs. But being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. Their enmity to David; they rise up against me in open rebellion, they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him; they seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me; if it lay in their power. And lastly, Here is their distance and estrangement from God, which was at the bottom of their enmity to David, they have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine.

His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, ver. 11. He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty; *Teach me thy way, O Lord,* the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in, when I am in doubt concerning it make it plain to me what I should do, let me hear the voice, saying, *This is the way,* Isa. xxx. 21. David was a very knowing man in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment. *Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth;* one would think it should be, *Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way;* but it comes all to one, it is the way of truth that God teacheth, and that we must choose and walk in, Psalm cxix. 30. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ, and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us, and if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teaching, 1 Jo. ii. 3. (2.) An upright heart, *unite my heart to fear thy name,* i. e. make me sincere in religion: an hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided between him and the world; not straggling from him. Our hearts are apt to wander, and hang loose; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foreign things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him, that is an united heart.

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for, (1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him. *O turn unto me,* as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for; my enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, and have mercy upon me: it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me. (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety. Give me thy strength, i. e. put strength into me that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin. He pleads relation, I am *thy servant;* I am so by birth, as the son of thine handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. *I am thine, save me.* The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put reputation on him, *shew me a token for good,* i. e. make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be when they perceive, *thou Lord hast holpen me, and comforted me;* and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort. The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

P S A L M LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an encomium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel-church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion for the temple's sake is here preferred, (1.) Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favours, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of divine blessings, ver. 4-7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state, others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt after the captivity: though no man cared for her, Jer. xxx. 17. This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after: yet God hath done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her; which all should have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church; to that therefore we must have an eye in singing this psalm.

A PSALM OF SONG FOR THE SONS OF KORAH.

1. **H**IS foundation is in the holy mountains. 2. The LORD loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm of song, whose subject is the holy mountains; i. e. the temple built in Zion upon Mount Moriah. That is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or, we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was in his thoughts contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though

though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of: every one knew what he meant when he had said thus abruptly, *its foundation is in the holy mountains.*

Three things are here observed in the praise of the temple,

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, ver. 1. The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter: Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God hath laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains, Isa. ii. 2. It is built firm, the mountains are rocky: and on a rock the church is built.

The world is founded upon the seas, Psalm xxiv. 2. which are continually ebbling and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, Isa. liv. 10. The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church, that is it which will support it and keep it from sinking: not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he hath sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it, ver. 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, of the temple: of the houses of doctrine, (so the Chaldee) more than all the dwellings of Jacob whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;* there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and showed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, 1. God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family-worship.

2. Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet when they come in competition, public worship (*cæteris paribus*) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God, ver. 3. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.* We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make, and the estimate put upon them in and by the scripture. Many base and ill things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, glorious things are spoken of it; God said of the temple, *Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually, I have sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever,* 2 Chron. vii. 16. *Beautiful for situation is mount Zion,* Psal. xlviii. 2. These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel church, it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood, it is a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned never so much to our reproach. Since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4. I will make mention of Rahab, and Babylon, to them that know me; behold Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia: this man was born there. 5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. 6. The LORD shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. 7. As well the fingers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

Sion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned, that other places have their glories. Ver. 4. *I will make mention of Rahab,* that is Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me, and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia or rather Arabia, we will observe that this man was born there; here and there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a profelyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it: that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and of uniting them in one body with the Jews: God saith, *I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with them that know me,* i. e. I will reckon them my people as much as Israel, when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Sion, i. e. born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Sion as freely as a true-born Israelite. They that were strangers and foreigners become fellow-citizens with the saints, Eph. ii. 17. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare Isa. xix. 23, 24, 25. *The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people; and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Sion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, ver. 5. Of Zion it shall be said of all her neighbours, that *this and that man was born in her;* many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings that should be greater favourites of heaven, and greater blessings to the earth than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceeded those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. *A man, a man was born in her;* by which some understand Christ, that man, that Son of man, who is fairer than the children of men, he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation, was that of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came;* Rom. ix. 5. Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles. Of Sion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Sion, the gospel of Christ shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Sion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of profelytes out of divers nations, shall be so far from occasioning discord and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Sion's strength; for God himself having founded her upon an everlasting foundation; whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

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(3.) Sion's sons shall be registered with honour, ver. 6. *The Lord shall count when he writes up the people;* and takes a catalogue of his subjects, that *this man was born there;* and as a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house, by the second birth, being born again of the Spirit. When God comes to return with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, Rom. ix. 4.—iii. 1, 2. For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly, five talents must be improved by those that were intrusted with five. *I know thy works and where thou dwellest,* and where thou wast born. Selah. Let those that dwell in Sion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Sion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there to praise God, ver. 7. It was much the honour of Sion, and is the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing: his work is done, and done cheerfully; see Psal. lxxviii. 25. *All my springs are in thee,* O Sion: so God saith, he hath deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances, there are the springs from which those streams take rise, which make glad the city of our God, Psal. xlv. 4. So the psalmist saith, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints; the springs of the joy of a carnal worldling, lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of joy of a gracious soul, lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fullness dwell.

P S A L M LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation; one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it doth not conclude as usually the melancholy psalms do, with any the least intimation of comfort or joy, but from first to last it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains: here is no mention of the afflictions of the church, but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion for our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm we have, (1.) The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, ver. 3—6. (2.) The wrath of God which was the cause of that pressure, ver. 7, 15—17. (3.) The wickedness of his friends, ver. 8—18. (4.) The application he made to God by prayer, ver. 1, 2—9—13. (5.) His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, ver. 10, 12, 14. Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly, those that are not, ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A Song or Psalm for the Sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mehalath Leannoth, Masehil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry. 3. For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. 5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem by the titles of this and the following psalms that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two of these names that were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31. where to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan that were Levites and preceptors in the songs of Zion, were the same, we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these were the penman of these psalms; there was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer or prophet, in the words of God, 1 Chron. xxv. 5. it is probable this was too a seer; and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him.

The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but before he begins his complaint, he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates, both that he looked for salvation, as had as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the author of it.

Now here we have the psalmist, 1. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now he was in affliction: for *is any afflicted? let him pray,* it is his comfort that he had prayed, it is his complaint; that notwithstanding his prayer he was still in affliction. He was, (1.) Very earnest in prayer. *I have cried unto thee,* ver. 1. and have stretched out my hands unto thee; ver. 9. as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short, and missing of it. (2.) He was very frequent and constant in prayer, I have called upon thee daily, ver. 9. *day and night,* ver. 1. or thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint: God's own elect cry day and night to him: Not only morning and evening, but beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always, and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continued instant in prayer. (3.) He directed his prayers

2. A confidence in God; *for thy servant that trusteth in thee.* They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

3. A disposition to communion with God; he hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. (1.) To be constant in prayer; *I cry unto thee daily, and all the day.* ver. 3. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in time of trouble. It we have made confession of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. (2.) To be inward with God in prayer; *to lift up his soul to him.* ver. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. (3.) To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction. ver. 7. *In the day of my trouble,* whatever others do, *I will call upon thee,* and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, *O Baal, hear us;* but there was no voice, nor any that regarded, 1 Kings xiii. 20.

8. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O LORD, neither are there any works like unto thy works. 9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O LORD: and shall glorify thy name. 10. For thou art great, and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD. I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12. I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul: and have not set thee before them. 15. But thou, O LORD, art a God full of compassion, and gracious: long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. 17. Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

1. He gives glory to God: for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

(1.) As being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, ver. 8. Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, or any of them all, there is none like unto thee, O Lord; none so wise, so mighty, so good; neither are there any works like unto thy works; which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him, is by acknowledging that there is none like him.

(2.) As the fountain of all being, and the center of all praise, ver. 9. *Thou hast made all nations,* made them all of one blood, they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name. This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of profelytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Rev. vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa. lxi. 23.

(3.) As a being infinitely great, ver. 10. Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestible, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, *thou dost wondrous things,* which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none beside thee. Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admirings of this God that doth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts whole God alone.

(4.) As a being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile, ver. 11. no mercy is to be expected from him. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, ver. 15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises: and this is our comfort in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him mercy rejoiceth against judgment. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger, and he is plenteous in mercy and truth, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

(5.) As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly, when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist hangs upon with most pleasure, ver. 12, 13. He had said, ver. 9. *All nations shall praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name.* It is some satisfaction to a good man to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. Whatever others do (saith David) *I will praise thee, O Lord my God.* not only as the Lord, but as my God. And I will do it with all mine heart, i. e. I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for *I will glorify thy name,* not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live and hope to be doing it to eternity. And with good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shewed him particular favours. *For great is thy mercy towards me.* The fountain of mercy is in exhaustibly full, the streams of mercy are infinitely rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it. *Great is thy mercy towards me.* Of the greatness of God's mercy; he gives this instance, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest*

hell: from death, from so great a death, as St. Paul, 2 Cor. i. 10. from eternal death, so even some of the Jewish writers understand it: David knew he deserved to have been cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah: but Nathan assured him, the Lord had taken away his sin; and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and therein God's mercy was great towards him. Even the best saints owe it not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell: and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious a release from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

3. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him, ver. 11. Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me; then takes notice of their character, they are proud men that looked with disdain upon poor David: many are made persecutors by their pride. They are violent men, that will carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they are terrible, formidable men; (so some) that do what they can to frighten all about them. Their number, there are assemblies of them, they were men in authority, and met in councils and courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs. But being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. Their enmity to David; they rise up against me in open rebellion, they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him; they seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me; if it lay in their power. And lastly, Here is their distance and estrangement from God, which was at the bottom of their enmity to David, they have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine.

His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, ver. 11. He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty; *Teach me thy way, O Lord,* the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in, when I am in doubt concerning it make it plain to me what I should do, let me hear the voice, saying, *This is the way,* Isa. xxx. 21. David was a very knowing man in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment. *Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth;* one would think it should be, *Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way;* but it comes all to one, it is the way of truth that God teacheth, and that we must choose, and walk in, Psalm cxix. 30. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ, and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us, and if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teaching, *Isa. ii. 3.* (2.) An upright heart, *unite my heart to fear thy name,* i. e. make me sincere in religion: an hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided between him and the world; not straggling from him. Our hearts are apt to wander, and hang loose; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foreign things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him, that is an united heart.

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for, (1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him. *O turn unto me,* as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for; my enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, and have mercy upon me: it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me. (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety. Give me thy strength, i. e. put strength into me that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin. He pleads relation, I am thy servant; I am so by birth, as the son of thine handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. *I am thine, save me.* The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put reputation on him, *shew me a token for good,* i. e. make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be when they perceive, *thou Lord hast holpen me, and comforted me;* and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort. The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an encomium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel-church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion for the temple's sake is here preferred, (1.) Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favours, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of divine blessings, ver. 4-7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state, others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt after the captivity: though no man cared for her, Jer. xxx. 17. This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after: yet God hath done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her; which all should have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church; to that therefore we must have an eye in singing this psalm.

A PSALM OF SONG FOR THE SONS OF KORAH.

1. HIS foundation is in the holy mountains. 2. The LORD loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song, whose subject is the holy mountains; i. e. the temple built in Zion upon Mount Moriah. That is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or, we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was in his thoughts contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though

though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of: every one knew what he meant when he had said thus abruptly, *its foundation is in the holy mountains.*

Three things are here observed in the praise of the temple,

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains. *ver. 1.* The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter: Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God hath laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, *the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains, Isa. ii. 2.* It is built firm, the mountains are rocky: and on a rock the church is built.

The world is founded upon the seas, *Psalms xxiv. 2.* which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, *Isa. liv. 10.* The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church, that is it which will support it and keep it from sinking: not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he hath sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it, *ver. 2.* *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion,* of the temple of the houses of doctrine, (so the Chaldee) more than all the dwellings of Jacob whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;* there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and shewed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, 1. God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family-worship.

2. Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet when they come in competition, public worship (*cateris paribus*) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God, *ver. 3.* *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.* We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make, and the estimate put upon them in and by the scripture. Many base and ill things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, glorious things are spoken of it; God said of the temple, *Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually, I have sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever, 2 Chron. vii. 16.* *Beautiful for situation is mount Zion, Psal. xlviii. 2.* There are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel church, it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood, it is a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned never so much to our reproach. Since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4. I will make mention of Rahab, and Babylon, to them that know me; behold Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia: this man was born there. 5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. 6. The LORD shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. 7. As well the fingers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

Sion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned, that other places have their glories. *Ver. 4.* *I will make mention of Rahab,* that is *Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me,* and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia or rather Arabia, we will observe that this man was born there; here and there one famous man eminent for knowledge and virtue may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a profelyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it: that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and of uniting them in one body with the Jews: God saith, *I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with them that know me, i. e. I will reckon them my people as much as Israel,* when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Sion, i. e. born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Sion as freely as a true-born Israelite. They that were strangers and foreigners become fellow-citizens with the saints, *Eph. ii. 17.* A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare *Isa. xix. 23, 24, 25.* *The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Sion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, *ver. 5.* Of Zion it shall be said of all her neighbours, that *this and that man was born in her,* many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings that should be greater favourites of heaven, and greater blessings to the earth than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceeded those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records, *A man, a man was born in her;* by which some understand Christ, that man, that Son of man, who is fairer than the children of men, he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation, was that of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came;* *Rom. ix. 5.* Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles. Of Sion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Sion, the gospel of Christ shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Sion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of profelytes out of divers nations, shall be so far from occasioning discord and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Sion's strength; for God himself having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

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(3.) Sion's sons shall be registered with honour, *ver. 6.* *The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people,* and takes a catalogue of his subjects, that *this man was born there;* and is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house, by the second birth, being born again of the Spirit. When God comes to return with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, *Rom. ix. 4.—iii. 1, 2.* For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly, five talents must be improved by those that were intrusted with five. *I know thy works and where thou dwellest,* and where thou wast born. Selah. Let those that dwell in Sion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Sion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there to praise God, *ver. 7.* It was much the honour of Sion, and is the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing: his work is done, and done cheerfully; see *Psal. lxxviii. 25.* *All my springs are in thee, O Sion:* so God saith, he hath deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances, there are the springs from which those streams take rise, which make glad the city of our God, *Psal. xvi. 4.* So the psalmist saith, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints; the springs of the joy of a carnal worldling, lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul, lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, therefore him should all fullness dwell.

P S A L M LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation; one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it doth not conclude as usually the melancholy psalms do, with any the least intimation of comfort or joy, but from first to last it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains: here is no mention of the afflictions of the church, but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion for our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm we have, (1.) The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, *ver. 3—6.* (2.) The wrath of God which was the cause of that pressure, *ver. 7, 15—17.* (3.) The wickedness of his friends, *ver. 8—18.* (4.) The application he made to God by prayer, *ver. 1, 2—9—13.* (5.) His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, *ver. 10, 12, 14.* Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly, those that are not, ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A Song or Psalm for the Sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Mafschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry. 3. For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. 5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me: thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem by the titles of this and the following psalms that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two of these names that were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 *Chron. ii. 4, 6.* There were two others famed for wisdom, 1 *Kings iv. 31.* where to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan that were Levites and preceptors in the songs of Zion, were the same, we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these were the penman of these psalms; there was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer or prophet, in the words of God, 1 *Chron. xxv. 5.* It is probable this was too a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him.

The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness, but before he begins his complaint, he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates, both that he looked for salvation, as bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the author of it.

Now here we have the psalmist,

1. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now he was in affliction: for *is any afflicted? let him pray,* it is his comfort that he hath prayed, it is his complaint; that notwithstanding his prayer he was still in affliction. He was, (1.) Very earnest in prayer. *I have cried unto thee;* *ver. 1.* and have stretched out my hands unto thee, *ver. 9.* as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it. (2.) He was very frequent and constant in prayer, I have called upon thee daily, *ver. 2.* nay, day and night, *ver. 1.* For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint: God's own elect cry day and night to him: Not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always, and therefore we shall speed in prayer, when we continued instant in prayer. (3.) He directed his

prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer, *ver. 2. Let my prayer come before thee*, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees prayers. He doth not desire that men should hear them, but, *Lord, incline thou thine ear unto my cry*, for to that I refer myself, give what answer to it thou pleasest.

2. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him in this psalm a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same tune with this psalm. He cries out, *ver. 3. my soul is full of troubles*; so Christ said, *now is my soul troubled*; and in his agony, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful*, like the psalmist's here, even unto death, for he faith, *my life draws nigh unto the grave*. Heman was a very wise man, and a good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to be a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the worst trouble, and that which sometimes the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. *The spirit of man*, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; *who then can bear a wounded spirit?*

3. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow, *ver. 5. Free among the dead*, one of that ghastly corporation; *like the slain that lie in the grave*, whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of, or is concerned for; nay, whom thou rememberest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms, they are *cut off from thy hand*, which is used to be employed in supporting them, and reaching out to them; but now there is no more occasion for it, they are cut off from it, and cut off by it: *for God will not stretch out his hand in the grave*, Job xxx. 21. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, *in darkness, in the deep*, *ver. 6. sinking*, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone. Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

4. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery, *ver. 7. Thy wrath lies hard upon me*; could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it had lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits, were God's waves with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarce recovered from one dark thought, but he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some but all God's waves were made use of in afflicting him, and bearing him down. Even the children of God's love, may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

5. It added to his affliction that his friends deserted him, and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble, it is some comfort to have those about us that love us, and sympathize with us, but this good man had none such; which gives him occasion not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of his affliction, *ver. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me*. Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him, for every creature is that to us and no more than God makes it to be: if our old acquaintance be sly of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do to other afflictions, Job xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress; *thou hast made me an abomination to them*, they are not only sly of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them not only with contempt but with abhorrence. Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman that was so famed for wisdom, yet when the world frowned upon him was neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

Lastly, He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable, *I am shut up, and I cannot come forth*, a close prisoner under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape. He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoaneth himself, *ver. 9. mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction*, and sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping, gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears; *mine eye mourns*, but *I cry unto thee daily*; let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together, *I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears*.

10. Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. 11. Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? 12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13. But unto thee have I cried, O LORD, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14. LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? 15. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted. 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off. 17. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in, *ver. 10, 11, 12. Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead*, and raise them to life again? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No, they leave it to their children to rise up in their rooms to praise God, none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise? Wherefore should they live but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But shall thy loving kindness to thy people be declared in the grave, either by those or to those, that lie buried there, and thy faithfulness to thy promise shall that be told in destruction? Shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there; and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departing souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice and loving-kindness, but deceased bodies can-

not; they can neither receive God's favours in comfort, nor return them in praise. Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him or would not, much less do they speak any disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief; *Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous*; these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance; but if it be not hastened it will come too late; for I shall be dead, and past relief, dead and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly. Job often pleaded this, Job vii. 8.—x. 21.

2. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so, because the deliverance was deferred, *ver. 13. unto thee have I cried* many a time, and found comfort in it, and therefore I will continue to do so, *in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee*. Note, Though our prayers be not answered presently, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie*. And God therefore delays the answer, that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in; in the morning after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; but how doth he say, *my prayer shall prevent thee*? Not as if he could wake sooner to pray, than God to hear and answer, for he neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates, that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray; would prevent his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. My prayer shall prevent itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out towards it with faith and expectation, even before the day dawns. God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies, let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

3. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer,

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in, *ver. 14. Lord, why castest thou off my soul?* What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me*. He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant; should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off: no wonder men cast me off, but Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? *Why hidest thou thy face?* as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me, or wilt not let me know it. Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him; nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be?

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until that God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances,

1. That God was a terror to him. *I suffer thy terrors*, *ver. 15*. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and the consequence of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, and of falling into his hands, appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He sweat and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty. Note, Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet for a time suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complained of the terrors of God *setting himself in array against him*, Job vi. 4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deep they wounded him. (1.) They had almost taken away his life: I am so afflicted with them, that I am ready to die, and as the word is, *to give up the ghost*. *Thy terrors have cut me off*, *ver. 16*. What is hell, that external excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and preying upon their guilty consciences. (2.) They had almost taken away the use of his reason; *when I suffer thy terrors I am distracted*; that sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls; a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion. (3.) This had continued long, *from my youth up, I suffer thy terrors*; he had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was *afflicted and ready to die from his youth up*, and suffered God's terrors; thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth; that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been; and that being much afflicted, and often ready to die when they were young, they have by the grace of God got such an habitual seriousness, and weanedness from the world as has been of great use to them all their days. And sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services, are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. (4.) His affliction was now in extremity, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass. They broke in upon him together like an inundation of water; and this daily and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the least breathing time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good man, he was so surrounded with terrors, that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

2. That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him, *ver. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind: Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous; with this the psalmist here closeth his complaint, as if this were it that completed his woe; and gave the finishing stroke to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

P S A L M LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer, and with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise, and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned; only in general that it was at a time when the house of David was woefully eclipsed: some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah

king was insulted over, and abused by Nebuchadnezzar, and then they make the title to signify no more, but that the psalm was set to the tune of a song of Ethan, the son of Zerah, called Maschil; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who outliving that glorious prince thus lamented the great disgrace done to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. 1. The psalmist in the joyful pleasant part of the psalm gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends; And this he doth more briefly, mentioning God's mercy and truth, ver. 1. and his covenant, ver. 2, 3, 4. But more largely in the following verses, wherein (1.) He adores the glory and perfection of God, ver. 5—14. (2.) He pleases himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, ver. 15—18. (3.) He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David as a type of Christ, ver. 19—37. 2. In the melancholy part of the psalm he laments the present calamitous state of the prince and royal family, ver. 38—45. Expostulates with God upon it, ver. 46—49. and then concludes with prayer for redress, ver. 50, 51. In singing this psalm we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

¶ MASCHIL OF ETHAN THE EZRAHITE.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. 2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise: for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire: We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgivings; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.

1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, ver. 1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God; yet we must abide by this principle, that God's mercies are inexhaustible, and his truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise. *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace, and Maschil, an instructing song for the edification of others.* We may be for ever singing of God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven world without end; and this is *singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever. With my mouth, and with my pen (for by that also we speak) will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations; assuring posterity from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he hath spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, Psal. lxxviii. 6.*

2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, ver. 2, 3, 4. Here we have,

1. The psalmist's faith and hope: Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but I have said, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that mercy shall be built up for ever. As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song, ver. 1. so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant. It is still increasing, like a house in the building up; and shall still continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever, for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem, are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the *tabernacle of David which is fallen down, shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old, Amos ix. 11.* Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because *thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens:* Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are *established in the very heavens, i. e. in his eternal counsels;* they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth: And the stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed.

2. An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope is built, *I have said it, faith the psalmist, for God hath sworn it, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel.* He brings in God speaking, ver. 3. owing to the comfort of his people, *I have made a covenant, and therefore will make it good.* The covenant is made with David, the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him, and for his sake; representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as head of the church; and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called God's chosen, and his servant. And as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant; (1.) The ratification of it: it was confirmed with an oath. The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent. (2.) The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue. *Thy seed will I establish for ever, so that David shall not want a son to reign, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.* And that it should continue a royal family, *I will build up thy throne to all generations, to all the generations of time.* This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace, there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, ver. 19, &c.

5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints: and to be

had in reverence of all them that are about him. 8. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. 11. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. 13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe, 1. Where and by whom God is to be praised.

(1.) God is praised by the angels above: *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, ver. 5. i. e. the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises: Bless the Lord, ye his angels, Psal. ciii. 20.* The works of God are wonders even to them that are best acquainted, and most intimately conversant with them; God's works the more they are known, the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love Heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and his wonders.

(2.) God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth: *praise waits for him in Zion, and though they fall so far short of the praises of the angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckons himself honoured by them.* Thy faithfulness and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, this shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is, that there is a promise, and that he is faithful that has promised. It is expected from God's saints on earth that they praise him: who should, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together let them join in praising God: the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints, he speaks again, ver. 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints;* saints should assemble for religious worship that they may publicly own their relation to God, and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also in them have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared: A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants, or approach him upon any particular errand. See Lev. x. 3. Those only serve God acceptably, who serve him with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.

2. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him to be a being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, ver. 6. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, sure they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him, *who in the Heavens can be compared with the Lord?* so as to challenge any share of that adoration and reverence which is due to him only, or to set up in rivalry with him for the homage of the children of men; they are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes peers, some parity there is between them, but none between God and the angels, they are not his peers. *To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the holy One, Isa. xl. 25.* This is insisted on again, ver. 8. *Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?* No angel, no earthly potentate whatsoever is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee, i. e. thine angels that are round about thee, attending thee with their praises, and ready to go on thine errands are all faithful. Or rather, in every thing thou dost, on all sides thou approve thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was. Among men it is too often found that those who are most able to break their word, are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

3. What we ought in our praises to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1. The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures, ver. 9. *thou rulest the raging of the sea,* than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, or more out of the power of man to give check to; yet it can swell no higher, roll no farther, heat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt than God suffers it. *When the waves thereof arise, thou callest presently hush them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm:* This coming in here as an act of omnipotence, what manner of man then was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?

2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church; his ruling the raging of the sea, and quelling its billows was an emblem of this, ver. 10. *Thou hast broken Rahab, many a proud enemy,* so it signifies; Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called Rahab, broken it in pieces, as one that is slain and utterly unable to make head again. The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength. God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies; we think he should slay them presently, but sometimes he scatters them; that he may send them abroad to the monuments of his justice, Psal. li. 11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces, is a comfort to the church in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.

3. The incontestible property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world, ver. 11, 12. Men are honoured for their large possessions; but *the heavens are thine, O Lord, the earth also is thine;* therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. *The world and the fulness thereof, all the riches contained in it; all the inhabitants of it, both the tenants and the tenants, they are all thine; for thou hast founded them.* And the founder may justly claim to be the owner. He instanteth, (1.) In the remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited and little known, yet *thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them.* The north

north is said to be hung over the empty place, yet what fulness there is there, God is the owner of it. (2.) In the highest parts of the world; he insinuateth in the two highest hills in Canaan, Tabor and Hermon, one lying to the west, the other to the east, these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thine altar; the little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, *Psalm* lxx. 12. Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee, on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then indeed it might be said to rejoice, in that voice which was there heard, *This is my beloved Son*.

4. That power and justice, that mercy and truth with which he governs the world, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, *ver.* 13, 14. (1.) God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist the force or bear the weight of his mighty hand. *High is his right hand*, to reach the highest, even those that *set their nests among the stars*, *Amos* ix. 2, 3. *Obad.* 4. his right hand is exalted in what he hath done, for in thousands of instances he hath signified his power, *Psalm* cxviii. 15. (2.) He never did, nor ever will do, any thing that is either unjust or unwise; for *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne (so some) the establishment of it (so others); the preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment. (3.) He always doth that which is kind to his people, and consonant to the word which he hath spoken; mercy and truth shall go before thy face to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee. Mercy in promising, truth in performing; truth in being as good as thy word; mercy in being better. How praise-worthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection!

15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. 16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18. For the LORD is our defence; and the holy One of Israel is our king.

The psalmist having largely shewed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shews the blessedness of the Israel of God. As *there is none like unto the God of Jehu*, so, *happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people*, especially as a type of the gospel Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

1. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, *they know the joyful sound*, *ver.* 15. This includes, either, (1.) To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, *Numb.* xxiii. 21. Israel has the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the going in the top of the mulberry-trees, was indeed a joyful sound, *2 Sam.* v. 24. and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph: these were joyful sounds. Or, (2.) To the sound that was made over the sacrifices, and on the solemn feast-day, *Psalm* lxxxi. 1, 2, 3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. Or, (3.) To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound; a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the sound of abundance of rain; blessed is the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

2. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them: *They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance*; they shall govern themselves by thy conduct, guided by thine eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations; they shall have the favour of God, they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing in them; They shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's loving kindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them, and make them sincere in it, aiming at this as their end, to be accepted of the Lord. We then walk in the light of the Lord, when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

3. They never want matter for joy! blessed are God's people, for in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, *they shall rejoice all the day*. They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to balance their grievances and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full, *1 John* i. 4. and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

4. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity; they are happy, for they are high. *Surely in the Lord*, in the Lord Christ, *they have righteousness and strength*, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance, and therefore in him shall all the seed of Israel glory, *Isa.* xlv. 24, 25. And so it is here, *ver.* 16, 17. (1.) In thy righteousness shall they be exalted; and not in any righteousness of their own. We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence. (2.) Thou art the glory of their strength, i. e. thou art their strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in. *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*. (3.) In thy favour, which through Christ we hope for, *our horn shall be exalted*: the horn notes beauty, plenty and power, these they have who are made accepted in the beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world, than to be God's favourites?

5. Their relation to God is their protection and safety, *ver.* 18. *For our shield is of the Lord* (so the margin): and *our king is from the holy One of Israel*. If God be our ruler, he will be our defender; and who is he then that can harm us? It was the happiness of Israel, that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks, and the nominating of their king (so some take it). Or rather, that he was himself a wall of fire round about them, and as a holy One the author and center of their holy religion; he was their king, and so their glory in the midst of them. Christ is the holy One of Israel, that holy thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that he was born King of the Jews. Now this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that, to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people. 20. I have found

David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. 21. With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. 26. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 27. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. 28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: 31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: 32. Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

The covenant God made with David and his seed, was mentioned before, *ver.* 3, 4. but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishment in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarce applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only, who is therefore called *David our king*, *I Hof.* iii. 5. And very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption, all our springs are in that; *1st.* *ver.* 3. *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*, *Acts* xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies, Observe,

1. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, (1.) How it was spoken *ver.* 19. *Thou spakest in vision to thy holy One*. God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, *2 Sam.* vii. 12—17. Then when the holy one of Israel was their king, *ver.* 18. Then he appointed David to be his viceroy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he spake in vision concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly acquainted with the whole design of redemption, *Matt.* xi. 27. (2.) How it was sworn to, and ratified, *ver.* 35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness*, that darling attribute. In swearing by his holiness, he swore by himself, for as soon will he cease to be, as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough, he need not swear again as David did, *1 Sam.* xx. 17. For his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a priest, so he was made a king by an oath, *I Hof.* vii. 21. For his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

2. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, *ver.* 19, 20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and therefore both are called God's kings, *Psalm* ii. 6. David was mighty, a man of courage, and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people; not out of the princes, but the shepherds; God found him out, exalted him, and laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ; (1.) He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, *able to save to the uttermost*. Mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God, mighty in love for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the mighty God, *Isa.* ix. 6. (2.) He is chosen out of the people, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood; being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. (3.) God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing, for the salvation from first to last is purely the Lord's doing. *He has found the ransom*, *Job* xxxiii. 24. For we could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, *Rev.* v. 3, 4. (4.) God has laid help upon him; not only helped him but treasured up help in him for us; laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven; *In me is thy help*, *I Hof.* xiii. 9. (5.) He has exalted him by constituting him the prophet, priest, and king of his church; clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand: Whom God chooseth and useth he will exalt. (6.) He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed. (7.) In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men.

3. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type and the Son of David in the antitype; in which not only gracious but glorious things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant: And what makes for him makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking, *ver.* 21. *with him my hand* not only shall be, but *shall be established* by promise, shall be so established, as that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so as that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin, they shall all be usurped and fought against. Christ had a great deal of hard work to do, and hard usage to go through, but he that gave him commission, gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission. *Mine arm also shall strengthen him* to break through and bear up under all his difficulties. No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen.

(2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies; that they should not encroach upon him, *ver.* 22. *The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him*

him, nor afflict him. He that at first broke the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design, but he could only reach to bruise his heel, further he could not exact upon him or afflict him. Christ became a surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to have gained advantage against him, but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they could not exact upon him; *the prince of this world cometh, but he has nothing in me*, John xiv. 30. Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him. *Ver. 23. I will beat down his foes before his face*, the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the death of death itself, and the destruction of the grave, *Hos. xiii. 14*. Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation that persecuted Christ, and put him to death. Nay, and all Christ's enemies that hate him, and will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Luke xix. 27*.

(3.) That he should be the great trustee of the covenant between God and men. That God would be gracious and true to him, and in him be gracious and true to us, *ver. 24. My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*. It was with David; God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful; it was with Christ; God made good all his promises to him. But that is not all, God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ, it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply themselves for it. *ver. 28. My mercy will I keep for him*, to be disposed of by him for evermore; in the channel of Christ's mediation, all the streams of divine goodness will for ever run; And therefore it is *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which we look for unto eternal life*, Jude 21. John xvii. 2. And as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is through him firm to us, *my covenant shall stand fast with him*, both the covenant of redemption made with him, and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator, *Heb. viii. 6*. The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred, and the Father has committed all judgment to him; that all men might honour him, John v. 22, 23. therefore it is here said, *In my name shall his horn be exalted*; this shall be his glory, that God's name is in him, *Exod. xxiii. 21*. and that he acts in God's name, as the Father gave me commandment for it.

(4.) That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged, *ver. 25. I will set his hand in the sea, i. e. He shall have the dominion of the seas, and the Isles of the sea, and his right hand in the rivers, the inland countries that are watered with rivers*. David's kingdom extended itself to the great sea, and the Red-sea, to the river of Egypt, and the river Euphrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah, that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when the kingdoms of this world shall become us the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, *Rev. xi. 15*. and the isles shall wait for his law.

(5.) That he should own God as his father, and God would own him as his son, his first-born, *ver. 26, 27*. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon, (for he who also was a type of Christ as well as David) *2 Sam. vii. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son*, and the relation shall be owned on both sides. (1.) *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father*. It is likely Solomon did so, but we are sure Christ did so in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him *holy Father, righteous Father*, and taught us to address ourselves to him as *our Father in heaven*. Christ in his agony cried unto God, *Thou art my Father, Matth. xxvi. 39*. *O my father*, and upon the cross, *Father, forgive them; Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*: He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; he is *my God and your God*, John xx. 17. And as the rock of his salvation would bear him up and bear him out in his undertaking, and make him more than a conqueror, even a complete Saviour, and therefore with an undaunted resolution he endured the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. (2.) *I will make him my first-born*. I see not how this can be applied to David, it is Christ's prerogative to be the first-born of every creature, and as such the heir of all things, *Col. i. 15*. *Heb. i. 2-6*. when all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his first-born, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the king of kings, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him, *1 Pet. iii. 22*.

(2.) With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters, this doth so, *ver. 29-36. His seed shall endure for ever, and with it his throne*; now this will be differently understood according as we apply it to Christ or David.

(1.) If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah, that descended from the loins of David; it is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at that time under, *ver. 38*. But let this encourage them, that though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message, *2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. If he commit iniquity I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him*. Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial dignity a very long time; that as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c. And that the family of David continued a family of distinction, till that Son of David came, whose throne should endure for ever; See *Luke i. 27-32*. (2.) If David's posterity, in after-times, should forsake God, and their duty, and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgment upon them, and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his loving-kindness from David, nor break his covenant with him; for in the Messiah who should come out of his loins all these promises shall have their accomplishment to the full. Thus when the Jews were rejected; yet the apostle makes it out that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiritual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, *Rom. xi. 7*.

(2.) If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed: the children which God hath given him, *Heb. ii. 13*. This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church, in the heart, as the days of heaven. To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve, and honour him, *he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days*. And this holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days

shall be no more. And thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

1. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects, their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant, and be assured of that notwithstanding.

(1.) It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. It is possible his children may forsake God's law, *ver. 30*. by omittings, and break his statutes, *ver. 31*. by commissions. There are spots, that is the spots of God's children, *Deut. xxxii. 5*. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those that are the members of it, and these corruptions break out.

(2.) They are here told that they must smart for it, *ver. 32. I will visit their transgression with a rod*, their transgression sooner than that of others; you only have I known and therefore I will punish you, *Amos iii. 2*. Their being related to Christ, shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people. (1.) It is but a rod, not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This notes gentleness in the affliction, it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children, and it notes a design of good in and by the affliction; such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. (2.) It is a rod in the hand of God. I will visit them. He that is wise and knows what he doth, gracious, and will do what is best. (3.) It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of, but when there is great need. If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

2. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this, *ver. 33. Nevertheless my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him*. (1.) Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken. Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it doth not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people. (1.) For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God saith, *I will not take it from him*, *ver. 33. I will not lie unto David*. *ver. 35*. we are unworthy, but he is worthy. (2.) For the covenant sake. *My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break*. It was supposed that they had broke God's statutes, profaned and polluted them, so the word signifies, but, faith God, I will not break; I will not profane and pollute my covenant. It is the same word. That which is said and sworn is. That God will have a church in the world, as long as sun and moon endure, *ver. 36, 37*. The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measures of; but the seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world while the world stands, to shine in it, and when it is at an end they shall be established lights, shining in the firmament of the Father.

38. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown, by casting it to the ground. 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges, thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. All that pass by the way, spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah. 46. How long, LORD, wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48. What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. 49. Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou twarest unto David in thy truth? 50. Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; 51. Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. 52. Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and amen.

In these verses we have,

1. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. Thou saidst thou wouldst not take away thy loving-kindness, but thou hast cast off. Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word, and never contradict it.

(1.) David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed; but how he was wroth with him, *ver. 38*. had entered into covenant with the family, but now for ought he could perceive he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, *ver. 39*. we misconstrue the rebukes of providence, if we think they make void the covenant. When the great anointed one, Christ himself was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off; and was wroth with him; and yet did not make void his covenant with him, for that was established for ever.

(2.) The honour of the house of David was lost and laid in the dust; Thou hast profaned his crown, which was always looked upon as sacred, by casting it to the ground, to be trampled on, *ver. 39. Thou hast made his glory to cease*, so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon doth it wither; and thou hast cast his throne down to the ground, not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom, *ver. 44*. If it were penned in Rehoboam's time it was true as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust,

just, but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which fadeth not away.

(3.) It was exposed, and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family, *ver. 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges*, all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection, which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them, and thou hast made even his strong holds a ruin, so that they were rather a reproach to them, than any shelter. And then, *ver. 41. All that pass by the way spoil him*, and make an easy prey of him, see *Psal. lxxx. 12, 13*. The enemies talk insolently, *he is a reproach to his neighbours*, who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity, *ver. 42. Thou hast set at the right hand of his adversaries*, not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way. If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power unless it were given them from above. But when God doth permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleaseth them, *thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice*; and this for thy glory, that those who hate thee, shall have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee.

(4.) It was disabled to help itself, *ver. 43. Thou hast turned the edge of his sword*, rebated it, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and which is worse, thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle. The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirit makes them, nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them, but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand, that should stand up for it.

(5.) It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit, *ver. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened*, i. e. it is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age. This should intimate that it was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old, and began to decay already. And thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach, that a family which in the first and second reign looked so great, and made such a figure, should in the third dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with what was expected, were but the days of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the day of their youth shortened, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn, (1.) What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been upmost; when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory. (2.) How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant made void, if we be disappointed of that; a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master hath so expressly told us, that his kingdom is not of this world.

2. A very pathetic expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy.

1. The long continuance of the trouble, *ver. 46. How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thyself for ever?* That which grieved them most was, that God hid himself as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them; and that he had kept them long in the dark: it seemed an eternal night when God was withdrawn, thou hidest thyself for ever. Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them, *shall thy wrath burn like fire*, i. e. how long shall it burn? Shall it never be put out? what is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever: And is that the lot of thine anointed?

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death. Lord, let thine anger cease and return in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Lamenting my life is so transitory, and will ere long be at an end, let it not be always so miserable, as that I should rather chuse no being at all than such a being. Job pleads thus, *chap. x. 20, 21*. And probably the psalmist here urgeth it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the days of whose youth were shortened, *ver. 45*.

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life, *ver. 47. Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am*, say some; therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? or, unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam? Now, this may be understood either, (1.) As speaking a great truth. If the ancient loving-kindnesses spoken of, *ver. 49*, be forgotten, those relating to another life, man is indeed made in vain; considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side; besides, we might be ready to think man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers and faculties of reason, and filled with such vast designs, and desires; but God would not make man in vain, therefore, Lord, remember those loving-kindnesses. Or, (2.) As speaking a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain, *God has not made all men*, nor any man in vain, *Isa. xlv. 14*. For, (1.) If we think that God hath made man in vain, because so many have short lives, and long affliction in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that therefore they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble yet may glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. (2.) If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves they were made in vain, better for them had they not been born, than not to be born again; but it was not long of God that they were made in vain, it was long of themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil, and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidable nature of death, *ver. 48. What man (what strong man, so the word is) is he that liveth, and shall not see death*. The king himself, of the house of David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke: Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. *Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* No, he shall not when his time is come; let him not therefore be delivered into the hand of the grave, by the miseries of a dying life, till his time is come. We must learn here, that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave: It concerns us therefore to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for, and the covenant he made with, his servant David, *ver. 49. Lord where are thy former*

loving kindnesses which thou shewest, nay, which thou swearest, to David in thy truth? Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David? God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us, that God will not cast off those whom he hath chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies, and the indignity done to God's anointed: *ver. 50, 51. Remember, Lord, the reproach*, and let it be rolled away from us, and returned upon our enemies. (1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached. (2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burden to all that were concerned for the honour of God; *I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people*, and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart, and can scarce keep up my spirits under the weight of. (3.) They are thine enemies who do thus reproach us, and wilt thou not appear against them as such? (4.) They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming, they have reproached the delays of the Messiah, so Dr. Hammond: They called him, *He that should come*, but because he was not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them, he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do in like manner reproach the footsteps of the Messiah, when they ask, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed, some refer to the serpent's bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman: Or, to the sufferings of Christ's followers that tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

Lastly, the psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint, *ver. 52. Blessed be the Lord for evermore, amen, and amen*. Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies; the more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarreling with God's providences, and questioning his promises: let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God; however it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never distrust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it, in blessing God we encourage ourselves. Here is a double amen: according to the double signification amen, so it is, God is blessed for ever, amen: be it so, let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint, *ver. 1*. And now he concludes it with a doxology. They that give God thanks for what he has done, may give him thanks also for what he will do; God will follow those with his mercies, that in a right manner follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

The foregoing psalm was supposed to be penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses, as appears by the title, the most ancient penman of sacred writ. We have upon record a praising song of his, *Exod. xv. which is alluded to Rev. xv. 3. and an instructing song of his; Deut. xxxii. But this is of a different nature from both, for it is called a prayer. It is supposed that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, that they should be wasted away by a series of miseries for thirty-eight years together, and none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses, *Deut. xxxi. 19—21. was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story, to which this psalm seems to refer, Numb. xiv. Probably, Moses penned this prayer to be daily used, either by their people in their tents, or, at least, by the priests in the tabernacle service, during that tedious fatigue of theirs in the wilderness. In it, 1. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him however, ver. 1, 2. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, ver. 3—6. 3. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, ver. 7—11. 4. He commits himself and his people to God by prayer for divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, ver. 12—17. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general, and, in singing of it, we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnisheth us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.**

A PRAYER OF MOSES THE MAN OF GOD.

1. LORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return, ye children of men. 4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood, they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up: in the evening it is cut down and withereth.

This psalm is intitled a prayer of Moses, where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection; perhaps it was written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouth, which they might make use of in turning to the Lord.

Lord. Moses is here called the man of God, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of the great Prophet.

In these verses we are taught,

1. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days, *ver. 1. Lord thou hast been to us a habitation, or dwelling place; a refuge, or help, in all generations.* Now they were fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their habitation, and wherever they went, they were at home at rest in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then God was their refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived, and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort, in reference to all the toils and tosses they meet with in this world. In him we may repose and shelter ourselves, as in our dwelling-place.

2. To give God the glory of his eternity, *ver. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world, as it is expressed, Prov. viii. 26. before the earth fell in travail, or, as we may read it, before thou hadst formed the earth and the world, i. e. before the beginning of time thou hadst a being, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God: an eternal God, whose existence had neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it; but who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time.* Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends we may take comfort from God's immortality: we are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an ever-living God, and they shall find him so that have him for theirs.

3. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible, uncontrollable power to dispose of him as he pleaseth, *ver. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction, with a word's speaking when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house, and thou sayest, Return, ye children of men.* 1. When God is by sickness, or other afflictions turning men to destruction, he doth thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. This God speaketh once, ye twice. *Return, unto me, from whom ye have revolted, Jer. iv. 1.* 2. When God is threatening to turn men to destruction, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he wonderfully recovers them, and saith, or as the old Translation reads it, *Again thou sayest, Return, to life and health again.* For God kills, and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and brings up. 3. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, *Return, ye children of men, one as well as another; return to your first principles, let the body return to the earth as it was, (dust to dust, Gen. iii. 19.) and let the soul return to God who gave it, Eccles. xii. 7.* 4. Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, *Return, ye children of men, viz. at the general resurrection, when though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and then shalt thou call, and I will answer, Job xiv. 14, 15. thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return. The body, the soul, shall both return and unite again.*

4. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, *ver. 4. The patriarchs, some of them, lived near a thousand years; Moses knew it very well, and had recorded it: but what is their long life to God's eternal life? A thousand years to us is a great deal, it is what we cannot expect to come near to, or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is in thy sight as yesterday, as one day, as that which is freest in mind; nay, it is but as a watch of the night, which was but three hours.* 1. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity; they are less than a day, than an hour to a thousand years; betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child that is born and dies the same day, is to theirs. 2. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the eternal Mind, as what was done yesterday, or the last hour is to us, and more too. God will say at the great day, to those whom he has turned to destruction, *Return, arise ye dead.* But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that it is a long time since it was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years in God's sight, are but as one day. *Nullum tempus occurrit regi.* To this purpose these words are quoted, *2 Pet. iii. 8.*

5. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity even at his best estate, *ver. 5, 6. Look upon all the children of men, and, we shall see, 1. That their life is a dying life; Thou carriest them away as with a flood, i. e. they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; the flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death, or we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or, as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge.* 2. That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet they are as asleep; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wake them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passeth unobserved by us, as it doth with men asleep, and when it is over it is as nothing. 3. That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass, which grows up and flourisheth in the morning, looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mowers cut it down and it withers presently; changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly, and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time. Man, in his prime, doth but flourish as the grass, which is weak and low, and tender, and exposed; and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but it may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is in the summer. *All flesh is as grass.*

7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. 10. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

Moses had in the foregoing verses lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men are as a sleep, and as the grass: but here he teacheth the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves; their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure: here they speak of themselves; *we Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days are passed away.*

1. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries; *we are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thine anger, by thy wrath, ver. 7. our days are passed away in thy wrath, ver. 9.* The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's: but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more but a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there had been no such debt owing to it; it is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Are we consumed by duties of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronical disease? we must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any surprising stroke? that also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

2. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them, *ver. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins.* It was not without cause that God was angry with them, he hath said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt;* but they had provoked him, and will own that in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them, 1. For their open contempts of him, and the daring affronts they had given him. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrust of his power, and their despising the pleasant land; these he set before him, when he passed that sentence upon them: these kindled the fire of God's wrath against them, and kept good things from them. 2. For their more close departures from him; *thou hast set our secret sins,* those that go no further than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts, thou hast set these in the light of thy countenance, i. e. thou hast discovered those, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them. Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. Those that in heart return into Egypt, that set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolvers or idolaters. See the folly of those that go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

3. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life, or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible, *ver. 9. All our days are like to be passed away in thy wrath, i. e. under the tokens of thy displeasure: and though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told.* The thirty-eight years which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of a tale that is told: for it was only to pass away time, like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt, *there was not one feeble person among their tribes, Psal. cv. 37.* but now they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospects of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world; *we spend our years, we bring them to an end, each year, and all at last, as a tale that is told: as the breath of our mouth in winter, (so some) which soon disappears: as a thought, (so some) than which nothing more quick; as a word, which is soon spoken, and then vanisheth into air: or, as a tale that is told.* The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale that is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tale of sorrow; most mixt, but all short and transient: that which was long in doing, may be told in a short time. Our years when they are gone, can no more be recalled, than the word that we have spoken can. The loss and waste of our time, which is our fault and folly, may be thus complained of; we should spend our years like the dispatch of business, with care and industry, but alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, mindlessly and without regard.

Every year passed as a tale that is told; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few, *ver. 10. seventy or eighty at most, which may be understood, either, 1. Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness: all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above twenty years old, were to die within thirty-eight years; they numbered those only that were able to go forth to war, most of whom, we may suppose, were between twenty and forty, who therefore must all die before eighty years old, and many before sixty, and perhaps much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers. And those that lived to seventy or eighty, yet being under sentence of consumption, and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness state, their strength, their life, was nothing but labour and sorrow, which otherwise would have been made a new life, by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or, 2. To the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before Moses it was ordinary for men to live about an hundred years, or near an hundred and fifty; but since, seventy or eighty is the common stint, which few exceed, and multitudes never come near. We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who lived to be seventy years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which before had been transmitted by tradition; now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled, and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men living long that there had been. If by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to eighty years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of, it doth but serve to prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even *their strength then is labour and sorrow, much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in.* Or, it may be taken thus: *Our years are seventy, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are eighty; but the breath of our years (for so the latter word signifies, rather than strength) the whole extent of them from infancy to old age, is but labour and sorrow.* In the sweat of our face we must eat bread, our whole life is toilsome and troublesome: and, perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, it is soon cut off, and we fly away, and do not live out half our days.*

4. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God, *ver.*

ver. 11. *Who knows the power of thine anger?* 1. None can perfectly comprehend it. The Psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach, and how deep it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger: damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? 2. Few do seriously consider it as they ought. *Who knows it*, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those that make a mock of sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. For according to thy fear, so is thy wrath, i. e. God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it: let men have never so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is a cause for, and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world, is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. *Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?*

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. 13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. 14. O satisfy us early with thy mercy: that we may rejoice, and be glad all our days. 15. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us: and the years wherein we have been evil. 16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations, and acknowledgments. *Is any afflicted? let him learn thus to pray.*

Four things they are here directed to pray for.

1. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, *Lord teach us to number our days*, ver. 12. i. e. Lord give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world. Note, 1. It is an excellent art rightly to number our days, so as not to be out in our calculation as he was, who counted upon many years to come, when that night his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days, as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. 2. Those that would learn this arithmetic doctrine must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of them to teach them by his Spirit to put them upon considering, and to give them good understanding. 3. We then number our days to good purpose, when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence, will very much contribute.

2. For the turning away of God's anger from them; that though the decree was gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remedy, but they must die in the wilderness, yet return, O Lord, be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants, ver. 13. send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some tokens given us of our restoration to thy favour? *We are thy servants, thy people*, Isa. lxix. 9. When wilt thou change thy way towards us? In answer to this prayer, and upon their possession of the land, (Num. xiv. 39, 40.) God in the next chapter proceeded with the law concerning sacrifices, Num. xv. 1, &c. which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants, for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shewed them such things as these.

3. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, ver. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own; have mercy upon us, O God, is a prayer we are all concerned to say Amen to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of divine mercy: That God's tender mercies may speedily prevent us early in the morning of our days, when we are young and flourishing, ver. 6. Let us pray for that true satisfaction and happiness which is to be had only in the favour and mercy of God; *Psalm* iv. 6, 7. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's loving kindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied; will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy.

(1.) That it would be a full fountain of future joys? *O satisfy us with thy mercy*, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be, while we lie under thy wrath; but that we may rejoice and be glad, not only for a time for the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness. Those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full, 1 John i. 4. so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation and nothing can separate them from it. (2.) That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us*; let the days of our joy in thy favour, be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been, and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. *Lord thou usest to set the one over against the other*, Eccl. vii. 14. do so in our case; let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling, now put into our hands the cup of salvation. God's people reckon the returns of God's loving kindness, a sufficient recompence for all their troubles.

4. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, ver. 16, 17. (1.) That he would manifest himself in carrying it on. *Let thy work appear upon thy servant*, let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself, and to sit us for thyself. God's servants cannot work for him, unless he work upon them, and work in them, both to will and to do. And then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us, when the operations of his grace are apparent upon us. Let thy work appear, and in it thy glory will appear to us and those that shall come after us. In praying for God's grace, God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image,

from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them, Num. xiv. 31. *Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones, will I bring into Canaan*; Lord, say they, let thy work appear upon us, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of. (2.) That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on; in doing their part toward it. 1. That he would smile upon them in it. *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, i. e. let it appear that God favours us; let us have God's ordinances kept up among us, and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances, (so some.) We may apply this petition both to our sanctification, and to our consolation; *Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God*, let that be upon us in all we say or do: let the grace of God in us make our faces to shine, and the light of our good works; that is, the comeliness God puts upon us, and those are comely indeed, who are so beautified. And then let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God. 2. That he would succeed them in it, *establish thou the work of our hands upon us*. God's working upon us, (ver. 16.) doth not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him, and working out our salvation. But when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to prosper our handy works, to give us to compass what we aim for his glory. We are so unworthy of divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it, and to repeat the request: *Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it*, and, in order to that, establish us in it.

P S A L M XCI.

Some of the ancients were of opinion, that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing Psalm which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for *Psalm* xcy. is expressly said to be penned by David, and long after Moses, Heb. iv. 7. And it is probable, this Psalm also was penned by David: it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad seal, he needed it himself, especially if the Psalm was penned, as some conjecture it was, at the time of the pestilence, which was sent for his numbering the people, but in the name of the King of kings, and under the broad seal of heaven. Observe, (1.) The Psalmist's own resolution to take God for his keeper, ver. 2. from which he gives both direction and encouragement to others, ver. 9. (2.) The promises which are here made in God's name to all those that do so in sincerity. 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of heaven, ver. 1—4. 2. They shall be delivered from the malice of the powers of darkness, ver. 3—5, 6. and that by a distinguishing preservation, ver. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, ver. 10—11. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, ver. 13. 5. They shall be the special favourites of God himself, ver. 14—16. In singing this we must shelter ourselves under, and then solace ourselves in, the divine protection. Many think, that to Christ, as mediator, these promises do primarily belong, (Isa. xlix. 2.) not, because to him the devil applied one of these promises, Mat. iv. 6. but because to him they are very applicable, and coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

1. **H**E that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge, and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust. 3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler; and from the noisome pestilence. 4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day: Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. 7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. 8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses we have,

1. A great truth laid down in general, that all those that live a life of communion with God, are constantly safe under his protection; and may therefore preserve a holy serenity, and security of mind at all times, ver. 1. *He that dwells*, that sits down in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, i. e. He that by faith chooseth God for his guardian, shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer, that he dwells in the secret places of the most High, i. e. He is at home in God, returns to God, and reposeth in him as his rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; worships within the vail, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they abide under the shadow of the Almighty, i. e. He shelters them, and comes between them, and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sun-bline. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence under God's protection, he will be their rest and refuge for ever.

2. The Psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself, ver. 2. *I will say of the Lord*, whatever others say of him, *He is my refuge*; I choose him so; and confide in him. Others made idols their refuge; but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, he is my refuge: Any other is a refuge of lies. And he is a refuge that will not fail me; for he is my fortress and strong hold; idolaters called their idols Mahuzzim, their most strong hold, Dan. xi. 19. but therein they deceived themselves, those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God their fortress. And having no reason to question his sufficiency, fully doth it follow, *in him will I trust*. If Jehovah be our God, our refuge and our fortress, what can we desire, which we may not be sure to find in him! He is neither sickle, nor false; nor weak, nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. *We know whom we have trusted*.

3. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise; not only from his own experience of the comfort of it, for in that it was possible there might be a fallacy, but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is, nor can be any deceit, ver. 3, 4, &c. *Surely he shall deliver thee*. Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God

God their refuge, cannot but desire that others may do so too. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which will be fatal to them, *ver. 3. From the snare of the fowler*, which is laid unseen, and catches the unwary prey on a sudden; And *from the noisome pestilence*, which seizeth men unawares, and against which there is no guard. This promise protects, (1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening, and very near, and yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, no more than the bird is of the snare of the fowler. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the divine providence, that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. (2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the *snare of the fowler*; and from the contagion of sin, which is the *noisome pestilence*. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul, will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their protector: they must needs be safe that have him for their keeper, and in a good bottom for whom he undertakes, *ver. 4. He shall cover thee*, shall keep thee *secret*, Psal. xxxi. 20. and so keep thee safe; Psal. xxvii. 5. God protects believers, 1. With the greatest tenderness and affection; which is intimated, in that, he shall cover thee *with his feathers, under his wings*, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, Matt. xxiii. 37. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection, when she sees them in danger; not only keeps them safe, but cherisheth them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, which are helpless as the chicken, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a profelyte to the true religion, that he is come to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*, Ruth ii. 12. 2. With the greatest power and efficacy; wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, yet are weak and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, *his truth shall be thy shield and buckler*, a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people, as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, *ver. 5, 6.* Here is, 1. Great danger supposed, the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are disposed to be timorous will not think themselves safe either night or day. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things which are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all: we read of *fear in the night*, Cant. iii. 8. There is also a *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, as that was which slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians; no locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our own bodies the seeds of them. But sure in the day-time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an *arrow that flies by day too*, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-noon, when we are awake, and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves nor can they secure us. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But, 2. Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger; *Thou shalt not be afraid*, i. e. God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, that fear which hath torment, in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being carelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing, that though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection. A believer needs not fear, and therefore, should not fear any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out, *O death where is thy sting?* And because it is under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities in a distinguishing way, *ver. 7.* When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that *thousands and ten thousands fall*, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, *fall at thy side, at thy right hand*, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee; and if they fall by the pestilence, their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee; yet *it shall not come nigh thee*, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not. Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption, may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be *afraid with any amazement*, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their life-time; *through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel, when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people, that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled in them, but his threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them, *ver. 8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked*, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Egypt by the pestilence; which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, *Luke xiii. 28.* so it will magnify the salvation of the saints; that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, *Isa. lxi. 24. Psalm lviii. 10.*

9. Because thou hast made the LORD *which is my refuge*, even the most High, thy habitation; 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14. Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour

him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purpose with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceeding great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

1. The psalmist assures believers of divine protection from his own experience, and that which he saith is the word of God, and what we may rely upon.

Observe, (1.) The character of those that shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises, it is much the same with that, *ver. 1.* They are such as make *the most High their habitation*, *ver. 9.* that are continually with God, and rest in him; that make his name both their temple and their strong tower; that dwell in love, and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our habitation; to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God, that is, we shall be welcome to him, as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance or molestation, from the arrests of the law, or the clamours of conscience: and then we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in *perfect peace*, *Isa. xvi. 3.* To encourage us to make the Lord our habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had in doing so; he whom thou makest thy habitation, is my refuge; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me. *In my father's house there are many mansions*, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another.

2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made *the most High their habitation*.

(1.) That whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them, *ver. 10. There shall no evil befall thee*; though trouble and affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall come not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though for the present, it be not joyous but grievous, yet in the end it shall yield so well, that thou thyself shalt own *no evil befall thee*. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it, and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling shall be taken under the divine protection, *there shall no plague come nigh that*; nothing to do thee or thine any damage. *Nihil accidere uno viro mali potest*, Seneca de providentia.

(2.) That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, *ver. 11, 12.* This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, and it is never the worse for its being quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, *Matt. iv. 6.* Observe,

1. The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being, and gives laws to them; whose they are, and whom they were made to serve, *He shall give his angels a charge over thee*; not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer. The angels keep the charge of the Lord their God; and this is the charge they receive from him. It notes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. The charge is *to keep thee in all thy ways*; here is a limitation of the promise, *they shall keep thee in thy ways*, i. e. as long as thou keepst in the way of thy duty; they that go out of that way, put themselves out of God's protection: this word the devil left out when he quoted it to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is *to keep thee in all thy ways*; even where there is no apparent danger, yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger we shall have it. Wherever the saints go, the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children.

2. The care which the angels take of the saints pursuant to this charge; *They shall bear thee up in their hands*, which notes both their great ability and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the nurse carries the little child about in her arms: it speaks us helpless, and them helpful. They are ascending in their ministrations, they keep the feet of the saints, lest they *stumble against a stone*, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble.

3. That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them, *ver. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*; the devil is called a roaring lion, the old serpent, the red dragon; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that, *Rom. xvi. 20. The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet*. Christ has broke the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, *Col. ii. 15.* and through him we are more than conquerors; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel to come and set their feet on the necks of these vanquished enemies. Some think, this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples commission, that they should *take up serpents*, *Mark xvi. 18.* It may be applied to that care of the divine Providence, by which we are preserved from ravenous noxious creatures; *The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee*, *Job v. 23.* nay, and have ways and means of taming them, *Jer. iii. 7.*

4. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he has in store for them, *ver. 14, 15, 16.* Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, *q. d.* Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them.

And now, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters. (1.) They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves. (2.) They are such as have set their love upon him; and they who rightly know him will love him, will place their love upon him, as the only adequate object of it; will let out their love towards him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him, with a resolution never to remove it to any rival. (3.) They are such as call upon him; that by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are which God makes to the saints.

(1.) That he will in due time deliver them out of trouble. *I will deliver him*, *ver. 14.* and again, *ver. 15.* noting a double deliverance; living and dying: a deliverance in trouble, and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength; if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge at length from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See *Psalm xxxiv. 19. 2 Tim. iii. 11.*—iv. 18.

(2.) That he will in the mean time be with them in trouble, *ver. 15.* If he doth not presently put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their

their sorrows, and know their souls in adversity; will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the first token of his presence with them in their troubles.

(2.) That herein he will answer their prayer: *He shall call upon me, i. e. I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer, answer by promises, Psalm lxxxv. 8. answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief; and answer by graces, strengthening them with strength in their souls, Psalm cxxxviii. 3. thus he answered Paul with grace sufficient, 2 Cor. xii. 9.*

(4.) That he will exalt and dignify them. *I will set him on high, out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock above the waves, Isa. xlviii. 16. They shall be enabled by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, and to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern, and then they are set on high. I will honour him; and those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, and designing them for his kingdom and glory, John xii. 26.*

(5.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world, ver. 16. *With length of days will I satisfy him; that is, 1. They shall live long enough; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for Heaven, and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or upon him? 2. They shall think it long enough, for God by his grace shall wean them from the world, and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, (satur dierum) satisfied with living. A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no not with long life; he still cries, Give, give; but he that has his treasure and heart in another world, has soon enough of this, he would not live always.*

(6.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world: This crowns the blessedness, *I will shew him my salvation; shew him the Messiah, so some; good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life, when he could say, mine eyes have seen thy salvation: nor was there any greater joy to the Old Testament saints, than to see Christ's day, though at a distance, or rather, the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and fought: he will shew him that, i. e. bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face, which we here see through a glass darkly; and in the mean time give him a prospect of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.*

P S A L M XCII.

It is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers, who are usually free of their conjectures, that this psalm was penned, and sung by Adam in innocency, on the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the psalm itself, which speaks of the workers of iniquity, when as yet sin had not entered. It is probable, it was penned by David, and being calculated for the sabbath day, 1. Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, ver. 1—3. 2. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, ver. 4, 5, 6. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption; the psalmist sings unto God both of mercy and judgment, the ruin of sinners, and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. The wicked shall perish, ver. 7. But God is eternal, ver. 8. 3. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, ver. 9, 10. 4. David's enemies shall be confounded, ver. 11. but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, ver. 12—15. In singing this psalm we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

¶ A PSALM OR SONG FOR THE SABBATH-DAY.

1. **I**T is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: 2. To shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night: 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. 4. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5. O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6. A brutish man knoweth not: neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed, or at least accustomed, to be sung in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath-day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for the Father worketh hitherto. Note, 1. The sabbath-day must be a day, not only of holy rest, but of holy work; and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath-day must be a thanksgiving-day; and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, A psalm or song for the age to come, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Christ, enjoy that Sabbatism which remains for the people of God, Heb. iv. 9. the beginning of the everlasting sabbath.

In these verses,

1. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God, ver. 1, 2, 3. *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.* Praising God is good work; it is good in itself and good for us: it is our duty, the rent, the tribute we are to pay to our great Lord, we are unjust if we withhold it; it is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it; it is good, for it is pleasant and profitable, work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in farther mercy: it is fit to sing to his name who is most high, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here,

(1.) How we must praise God; we must do it by *showing forth his loving kindness and his faithfulness.* Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must shew them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves, and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must shew forth not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him and strike an awe upon us, but his loving-kindness and his faithfulness, for his goodness is his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. and by

these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these therefore we must shew forth as our pleas in prayer, and the matter of our joy. This was then done, not only by singing, but by music joined with it upon an instrument of ten strings, ver. 3. but then it was to be with a solemn sound, not with that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them.

(2.) When we must praise God; *in the morning and every night.* Not only on sabbath days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families; shewing forth to ourselves and those about us, his loving-kindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God; must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh, and before the business of the day comes in upon us; and every night, when we are again composed and retired, and are recollecting ourselves: Give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in, we must bless God.

2. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to and to direct us in this work, ver. 4. *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.* Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise, that have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart, and therefore, whatever others may think of them, I must think well, and speak well of them. 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption?

(1.) Let us then thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist doth, *I will triumph in the works of thy hands.* From a joyful remembrance of what God hath done for us, we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2 Thess. ii. 14.

(2.) Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God, ver. 5. *O Lord how great are thy works!* Great beyond conception, beyond expression! The products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance; men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them. Men's works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, thy works are great, and such as cannot be measured; for thy thoughts are very deep, and such as cannot be fathomed. God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom, as his works do the efforts of our power. His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways, Isa. lv. 9. O the depth of God's designs! Rom. xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will according to which he doth all things. What a compass his thoughts fetch, and to what a length they reach!

3. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those that do, ver. 6. They are fools, they are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand how great God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, or give him the glory of them; they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands, Psal. xxviii. 5. particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own posterity, which is spoken of, ver. 7. they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of providence, nor care to know them, those that through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. 8. But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore. 9. For lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11. Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies: and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. 12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD, shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing: 15. To shew, that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The psalmist had said, ver. 4. that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he doth so.

1. He triumphs over God's enemies, ver. 7—9—11. triumphs in the foresight of their destruction; not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness.

He is confident of the ruin of sinners.

(1.) Though they are flourishing, ver. 7. *When the wicked spring as the grass in spring, so numerous, so thick sown, so green, and growing so fast; and all the workers of iniquity do flourish in pomp and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises; one would think all this were in order to their being happy; that it was a certain evidence of God's favour, and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve: but is quite otherwise; it is, that they shall be destroyed for ever. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, Prov. i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter, are put into the fattest pasture.*

(2.) Though they are daring, ver. 9. They are thine enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so; they are contrary to God, and they fight against God: they are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for *who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered?* Note, All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion, but they shall be scattered,

scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. *In the world to come they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous; so the Chaldee, Psalm i. 5.*

(3.) Though they had a particular malice against the psalmist, and upon that account he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them, *ver. 11. Mine eye shall see my desire on mine enemies that rise up against me, i. e. I shall see them not only disabled to do me any farther mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me; and brought either to repentance or ruin; and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more but thus, Mine eye shall look on mine enemies; and mine ear shall hear of the wicked. He doth not say what he shall see, or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God will be glorified, and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel; and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ will fall before him, and be made his footstool.*

2. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace.

(1.) In the glory of God, *ver. 8. But thou, O Lord, art most High for evermore.* The workers of iniquity that fight against us may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but *thou art High, most high for evermore;* their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting. Let us not therefore fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but *God's righteousness shall be for ever, Isa. lvi. 7, 8.*

(2.) In the grace of God; his favour and the fruits of it.

1. To himself, *ver. 10. Thou, O Lord, that art thyself most High, shalt exalt thy horn;* the great God is the fountain of honour, and he being high for evermore, himself will exalt his people for ever, for *he is the praise of all his saints, Psalm cxliii. 14.* The wicked are forbidden to lift up the horn, *Psalm lxxv. 4, 5.* but those that serve God and the interest of his kingdom, with their honour and power, and commit it to him to keep it, to raise it, to use it, and to dispose of it as he pleaseth, may hope that he will exalt their horn as the horn of an unicorn, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other; *My horn shall thou exalt, when thine enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be doomed to shame and everlasting contempt.* He adds, *I shall be anointed with fresh oil,* which speaks a fresh confirmation in his office, to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped: grace is the anointing of the Spirit, which when it is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, *When I grow old, thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil: My old age shall thou exalt with rich mercy,* so the Seventy: Compare *ver. 14. They shall bring forth fruit in old age.* The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness.

2. To all the saints. They are here represented as trees of righteousness, *Isa. lxi. 3. Psalm i. 3. Observe,*

(1.) The good place they are fixed in; they are planted in the house of the Lord, *ver. 13.* The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves, they are planted, not in common soil, but in paradise, in the house of the Lord. Trees do not use to be planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house; because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit that they receive all the sap and virtue that keeps them alive and makes them fruitful. They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory.

(2.) The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised,

1. That they shall grow, *ver. 12.* Where God gives true grace, he will give more grace; God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon, they shall grow nearer Heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world: They shall grow stronger like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

2. That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession, and in the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves, and respected by all about them. *They shall flourish like the palm-tree,* which has a stately body, *Cant. vii. 7.* large boughs, *Lev. xxiii. 40. Judges ix. 5.* Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here, as being ever green. The wicked flourish as the grass, *ver. 7.* which is soon withered, and the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived, and which the winter doth not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, that the more it is pressed down the more it grows, *sub pondre crescit,* so the righteous flourish under their burdens, the more they are afflicted, the more they multiply. Being planted in the house of the Lord, there their root is, *they flourish in the courts of our God,* there their branches spread: *Their life is hid with Christ in God.* But their light also shines before men. It is desirable, that those that have a place should have a name in God's house, and within his walls, *Isa. lvi. 5.* let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house: And let those that flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it, it is by virtue of this promise; *they shall be set and flourishing.* Their flourishing without is from a fulness within, from the root and fulness of the good olive, *Rom. xi. 17.* Without a living principle of grace in the heart, the profession will not be long flourishing, but where that is, *the leaf also shall not wither, Psal. i. 3. the trees of the Lord are full of sap, Psal. civ. 16.* See *Hos. xiv. 5, 6.*

3. That they shall be fruitful; were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but *they shall still bring forth fruit,* the products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and an useful conversation, good works by which God is glorified and others edified. These are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege as well as the duty of the righteous to abound; and it is the matter of a promise, as well as the matter of a command: It is promised they shall bring forth fruit in old age; Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace do not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work; This indeed shews that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said, *to shew that the Lord is upright, ver. 15.* that he is true to his promises, and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises that that divine nature is preserved and kept up, and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the Lord is upright, and so he will shew himself with an upright man, *Psalm xviii. 25.* This the psalmist triumphs in, *He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.* I have chosen him for my rock, on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet: I have found

him a rock, strong and steadfast, and his word as firm as a rock. I have found (and let every one speak as they find) that there is no unrighteousness in him. He is able, and will be as kind as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

P S A L M XCIII.

This short Psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. And it relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him doubtless the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the eternal Word, even before his incarnation he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken. (1.) Have other kings their royal robes? so has he, *ver. 1.* (2.) Have they their throne? so has he, *ver. 2.* (3.) Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? so has he, *ver. 3, 4.* (4.) Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? so is it his, *ver. 5.* In singing this Psalm we forget ourselves, if we forget Christ, to whom the Father has given all power both in Heaven and in earth.

1. THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty, the LORD is clothed with strength wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved. 2. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves. 4. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea. 5. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

Next to the being of God there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion; that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns, *ver. 1.* not only that he is King of right, and is the Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King in fact, and doth direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions, according to the counsel of his own will; This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms; *The Lord reigns;* It is the song of the gospel church, of the glorified church, *Rev. xix. 6. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns.* And here we are told how he reigns.

1. The Lord reigns gloriously; *He is clothed with majesty.* The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glowworm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

2. He reigns powerfully; He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is clothed with strength, as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness, and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour; both strength and honour are his clothing. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. 1. With this power he hath girded himself: it is not derived from any other, nor doth the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself, and with it doth whatsoever he pleaseth. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him, who has power to kill and cast into hell. 2. To this power it is owing, that the world stands to this day; The world also is established, it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; It is so still by that providence which upholds all things, and is a continued creation; it is so established that though he hath hanged the earth upon nothing, *Job. xxvi. 7.* yet it cannot be moved; all things continue to this day according to his ordinance. Note, The preserving of the power of nature and the course of nature, is what the God of nature must have the glory of, and we that have the benefit thereof daily, are very careless and ungrateful, if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world, and to settle the affairs of that; And if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

3. He reigns eternally, *ver. 2. Thy throne is established of old.* 1. God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, no doubt may give law to it, and so his title to the government is incontestible; *Thy throne is established,* it is a title without a flaw in it; and it is ancient, it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality or power was erected, as it will continue when all other rule, principality and power shall be put down, *1 Cor. xv. 24.* 2. The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels before all worlds. For he doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from these decrees, which are fixed as the everlasting mountains, *Zech. vi. 1. Thou art from everlasting,* and therefore *thy throne is established of old;* because God himself was from everlasting, his throne and all the determinations of it were so too; for in an eternal mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

4. He reigns triumphantly, *ver. 3, 4.* We have here, 1. A threatening form supposed, *The floods have lifted up, O Lord,* (to God himself the remonstrance is made) *the floods have lifted up their voice,* which speaks terror, nay, they have lifted up their waves, which speak real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, *Isa. lviii. 20. The heathen rage,* *Psalm ii. 1.* and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be tossed with tempests, *Isa. lv. 11.* and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, *Psalm xviii. 4.* We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts; but if the Lord reigns there, even the winds and seas shall obey him.

2. An immoveable anchor cast in this storm, *ver. 4. The Lord himself is mightier.* Let this keep our minds fixed. (1.) That God is on high, above them, which notes his safety; they cannot reach him, *Psalm xxix. 10.* and his sovereignty, they are ruled by him, they are over-ruled, and wherein they rebel overcome, *Exod. xviii. 11.* (2.) That he is mightier, doth more wondrously.

wondrous things than the noise of many waters : they cannot disturb his rest or rule : they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, the power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters ; there is more of sound than substance in it ; Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, Jer. xlv. 17. The church's friends are commonly worse frightened than hurt ; God is mightier than this noise ; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters, and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleaseth, command peace to the church, Psal. lxxv. 7. Peace in the soul, Isa. xxvi. 3. Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah is very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, Psal. xlv. 1, 2.

5. He reigns in truth and holiness, ver. 5. (1.) All his promises are inviolably faithful. Thy testimonies are very sure. As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to his promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is fast, and all the faints may rely upon it : Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, would certainly have its accomplishment in due time : Those testimonies upon which the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints was built, were very sure, and would not fail them. (2.) All his people ought to be conscientiously pure. Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever. God's church is his house ; it is a holy house cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service : The holiness of it is its beauty : nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an entire devotedness to his honour ; and it is its strength and safety : It is the holiness of God's house, that secures it against the many waters, and their noise ; where there is purity, there shall be peace. Fashions change, and that that is becoming at one time is not at another, but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those that belong to it ; it is perpetually decent ; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

P S A L M XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted ; And it is an appeal to God, as the judge of Heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks, (1.) Conviction and terror to the persecutors, ver. 1—11. shewing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them. (2.) Comfort and peace to the persecuted, ver. 12—23. assuring them, both from God's promise, and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would in due time appear to their joy, and the confusion of those that set themselves against them. In singing this psalm, we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion ; but at the same time look upwards to the righteous Judge, with an entire satisfaction, and look forwards, to the end of all these things, with a pleasing hope.

1. **O** LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth : O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. 2. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth : render a reward to the proud. 3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph ? 4. How long shall they utter and speak hard things ? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves ? 5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. 6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless : 7. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see : neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8. Understand, ye brutish among the people : and ye fools, when will ye be wise ? 9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? he that formed the eye, shall he not see ? 10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct ? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know ? 11. The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In these verses we have,

1. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, ver. 1, 2. And this speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries ; and shall not he avenge them speedily ? Luke xviii. 3—7. Observe here,

(1.) The titles they give to God, for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal, O God to whom vengeance belongeth : And thou judge of the earth. We may with boldness apply to him : for, 1. He is Judge, supreme Judge, Judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law, gives sentence upon every man according to his works, by the rule of that law. He hath prepared his throne for judgment : He hath indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him, Rom. xiii. 4. But he is the avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable ; his throne is the last refuge, the dernier resort, as the law speaks of oppressed innocency. He is universal Judge, not of this city or country only, but Judge of the earth, of the whole earth : None are exempt from his jurisdiction ; nor can it be alledged against an appeal to him in any court, that it is *coram non judice*. 2. He is just ; as he has authority to revenge wrong, so it is his nature and property and honour ; And this also is implied in the title here given to him, and repeated with such an emphasis, O God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good reason why we must not avenge ourselves, because God hath said, vengeance is mine, and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative, and step into his throne, Rom. xii. 19. Let this frighten those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controled, there is a God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account ; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong, to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him that judgeth righteously.

(2.) What it is they ask of God ; 1. That he would glorify himself, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God was withdrawn, and had forsaken the earth ; Lord, say they, shew thyself : make them known that thou art, and thou art ready to shew thyself strong, on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee. The enemies thought God was conquered, because his people were ; Lord, say they, Lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength ; Lift up thyself to be seen, to be feared, and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down. 2. That he would mortify the oppressors, render a reward to the proud,

i. e. reckon with them for all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people. These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence : The righteous God will deal with them according to their merit.

2. An humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. Where observe,

(1.) The character of his enemies they complain against ; they are wicked, they are workers of iniquity, they are bad, very bad themselves, and therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. Those are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, lost to all honour and virtue, that are cruel to the innocent and hate the righteous.

(2.) Their haughty barbarous carriage which they complain of. 1. They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high, and talk big, they triumph, they speak loud things, they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own, and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do ; and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion. They that speak highly of themselves, that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others ; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways and people, Jude 15. 2. They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God's people because they are his, ver. 5. They break in pieces thy people, O Lord ; break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons in pieces, and do all they can to, afflict thine heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down to root them out. God's people are his heritage ; there are those that, for his sake, hate them and seek their ruin : And this is a very good plea with God in our intercessions for the church ; Lord, it is thine, thou hast a property in it, it is thine heritage, thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues. And wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus ? 3. They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves, ver. 6. They not only oppress and impoverish, but they slay the widow and the stranger ; not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them ; because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy : Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to ; perhaps, because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous ?

(3.) A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution. Lord, how long shall they do thus ? and again how long ? when shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end ?

3. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered, ver. 7. yet they say, The Lord shall not see ; Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences ; yet they have the confidence to say, The Lord shall not see ; he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too ; Or they think they have managed it so artfully under colour of justice and religion, perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, doth not regard it, either as against justice, or as against his own people ; he will never call them to an account for it ; thus denying God's government of the world ; bantering his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity ; he that saith, either that Jehovah the living God shall not see, or that the God of Jacob shall not regard the injuries done to his people. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him ; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion, ver. 8. understand ye brutish among the people, and let reason guide you. Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits and philosophers and politicians, yet are really the brutish among the people : and if they would but understand they would believe. God by the prophet speaks, as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and shew themselves so by understanding and considering ; Ye fools, when will ye be wise ? so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account. Note, None are so bad, but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them ; none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise ; while there is life there is hope.

To evidence the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice, the psalmist argues,

1. From the works of creation, ver. 9. the formation of human bodies, which as it proves that there is a God, so it proves that God has infinitely and transcendently in himself all those perfections that are in any creature. He that planted the ear, (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground,) shall he not hear ? no doubt he shall more and better than we can ; He that formed the eye, (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know, and let us know by their dissections) shall he not see ? Could he give, would he give that perfection to a creature, which he has not in himself ? Note, 1. The powers of nature are all derived from the God of nature. See Exod. iv. 11. 2. By the knowledge of ourselves we may be led a great way towards the knowledge of God ; if by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude, that if we can see and hear, much more can God ; then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls and their noble faculties. The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not ; our God has no eyes or ears as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears ; because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him how we use it.

2. He argues from the works of Providence, ver. 10. He that chastiseth the heathen for their polytheism and idolatry, shall not he much more correct his own people for their atheism and profaneness ? He that chastiseth the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so ; and yet persecute those that are really so ? Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the world is ? Doth he regard, as King of Nations, and shall he not much more regard, as the God of Jacob ? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this ; He that instructeth the nations, i. e. gives them his law, shall not he correct ? i. e. shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it ? In vain was the law given, if there will not be a judgment upon it. And it is true that the same word signifies to chastise, and to instruct ; because chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction should go along with chastisement.

3. He argues from the works of grace ; He that teacheth man knowledge shall he not know ? He not only as the God of nature has given the light of reason, but as the God of grace has given the light of revelation, hath shewed man what is true wisdom and understanding ; and he that doth thus

this, shall he not know? *Jph. xxviii, 23.-28.* The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain: If all knowledge is from God, no doubt all knowledge is in God. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, he not only confutes the atheists, who said, *the Lord shall not see*, ver. 7, he will not take cognizance of what we do; but awakens us all to consider, that God will take cognizance even of what we think, ver. 11. *The Lord knows the thoughts of man that they are vanity.* 1. He knows those thoughts in particular, concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain; and laughs at the folly of those, who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. 2. He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be for the most part vain; that the imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts is evil, only evil, and that continually: Even in good thoughts there is a sickleness and inconstancy, which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teacheth him out of thy law: 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. 15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17. Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18. When I said, My foot slippeth: thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. 20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? 21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22. But the LORD is my defence: and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people; here assures them that are troubled of rest. See 2 *Thess. i. 6, 7.* He speaks comfort to suffering saints from God's promises and his own experience.

1. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them, ver. 12. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.* Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God which gives it another name, and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people, ver. 5. they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is, that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delighteth, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. *Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their hearts think so,* *Mat. x. 5, 6, 7.* Now it is here promised,

(1.) That God's people shall get good by their sufferings; when he chastens them he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a divine discipline: *for none teacheth like God.* Note, 1. The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation and improvement. 2. When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence, they then both speak men blessed, and help to make them so: for then they are marks of adoption, and means of sanctification. When we are chastened we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that doth good, but the teaching that goes along with it, and is the exposition of it.

(2.) That they should see through their sufferings, ver. 13. *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.* Note, 1. There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that feeds the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he hath afflicted them. 2. God therefore teaches his people by their troubles that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles; that being reformed they might be relieved; and the affliction having done its work, it may be removed.

(3.) That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings; which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God; *Until the pit is digged,* or rather, while the pit is in digging for the wicked, God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

(4.) That though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, ver. 14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that whatever their friends do God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; neither will he forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to, nor suffer himself to be deceived of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, *Rom. xi. 1.*

(5.) That as bad as things are they shall mend, and though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel, ver. 15. *Judgment shall return unto righteousness,* i. e. the seeming disorders of Providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, i. e. his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage: But it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or at the farthest in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to rights. And then *all the upright in heart shall be after it,* i. e. they shall follow it with their praises, and with an entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of divine Providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. *They shall walk after the Lord,* *Hos. xi. 10.* Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, afterwards of the heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby; *Then judgment returned even to righteousness.*

consciousness, i. e. to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who then were as much countenanced as before they had been trampled on.

2. From his own experiences and observations.

(1.) He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and impious men that had power in their hands, and abused it by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves *evil doers and workers of iniquity*, ver. 16. they abandoned themselves to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a *throne of iniquity*, ver. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil doers, and a protection and praise to them that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity, which by the policy of its council frameth mischief, and by its sovereignty enacts it and turns it into a law. Iniquity is daring enough, even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it: but how insolent, how mischievous is it when it is backed by a law? Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse for being enacted by law, nor will it excuse those that practise it to say, they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri nor the laws of the house of Ahab; and they condemn the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies, they framed mischief by a law when they obtained an impious edict against prayer, *Dan. vi. 7.* which when Daniel would not obey, they assembled together against him, ver. 11. and condemned his innocent blood to the lion: The best of benefactors to mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

(2.) This oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though when they are persecuted they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here, *his soul had almost dwelt in silence*, ver. 17. i. e. he was at his wits end, and knew not what to say or do: he was in his own apprehension at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave; that kind of silence. St. Paul, in a like case received a sentence of death within himself, *2 Cor. i. 8, 9.* He said, *my foot slippeth*, ver. 18. i. e. I am going irretrievably, there is no remedy, I must fall, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, or my hope fails me, I do not find such firm footing for my faith as I have sometimes found. See *Psal. lxxiii. 2.* He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts within him concerning the case he was in, and the construction to be made of it; and concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it.

(3.) In this distress they sought for help and succour, and some relief. (1.) They looked about for it and were disappointed, ver. 16. *Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?* Have I any friend that in love to me will appear for me? Hath justice any friend that, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured case? He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comfort, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, *Eccles. iv. 1.* When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity, *no man stood by him*, *2 Tim. iv. 16.* (2.) They looked up for it, ver. 20. They humbly expostulate with God; Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? we know thou wilt not. A throne has fellowship with God when it is a throne of justice, and answers the end of the erecting of it: for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resist them or set up against them shall receive to themselves damnation; but when it becomes a *throne of iniquity*, it has no longer fellowship with God: Far be it from the just and holy God that he should be the patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones; yea, though they be the *thrones of the house of David.*

(4.) They found succour and relief in God, and in him only; when other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him.

1. God helps at a dead lift, ver. 17. When I had almost dwelt in silence, then the Lord was my help, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and unless I had made him my help, by putting my trust in him and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say.

2. God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits, ver. 18. when I said my foot slippeth into sin, into ruin, into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord, held me up, and kept me from falling; and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from mine excellency, *Psal. lxxii. 4.* We are beholden not only to God's power but to his pity, for spiritual supports; thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy, and my hope in thy mercy, held me up. God's right hand sustains his people, when they look on their right hand and on their left, and there is none to uphold. And we are then prepared for his gracious supports when we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God to acknowledge it, and to tell him how our foot slippeth.

3. Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits, ver. 19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me;* that are noisy like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable: in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul, and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts, and keep my mind easy. The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts, they are soings to a heavy heart; but God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

4. God is and will be as a righteous Judge, the patron and protector of right, and the punisher and avenger of wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of and the experience of.

1. He will right the injured, ver. 22. when none else will or can or dare shelter me, *The Lord is my defence*, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them, and being ruined by them; and he is the rock of my refuge, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet to be out of the reach of danger. God is his people's refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe and may be secure; he is the rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immovable as a rock; natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

1. He will reckon with the injurious, ver. 23. *He shall render to them their own iniquity,* i. e. He shall deal with them according to their deserts; and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people shall be brought upon themselves; and it follows, he shall cut them off in their own wickedness.

wickedness. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompense of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of; *Yea the Lord our God, who takes our part, and owns us for his, shall cut them off, from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.*

P S A L M XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, Heb. iii. and iv. where it appears both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, Heb. iv. 7. *that the day here spoken of, ver. 7. is to be understood of the Gospel day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposeth to us a rest besides that of Canaan.* In singing of psalms it is intended, 1. *That we should make melody unto the Lord, and that we are here excited to do and assisted in doing; being called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 2. as a great God, ver. 3, 4, 5. and as our gracious benefactor, ver. 6, 7.* 2. *That we should teach and admonish ourselves, and one another: and we are here taught and warned to hear God's voice, ver. 7. and not to harden our hearts as the Israelites in the wilderness did, ver. 8, 9. lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest as they did. ver. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with an holy reverence of God's majesty and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.*

1. **O** COME let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. 6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. 7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand:

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs himself up and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it and cold in it. Observe,

1. How God is to be praised. (1.) With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise: it is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him, as a being infinitely perfect and blessed we should at the same time rejoice in him, as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. (2.) With humble reverence, and a holy awe of him, ver. 6. *let us worship and bow down and kneel before him*, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. (3.) We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; *Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him with psalms*; as those that are themselves much affected with his greatness and goodness are forward to own themselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affections in others also. (4.) We must praise God in concert, in solemn assemblies: *Come, let us sing*, let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone; but others with me. *Let us come together before his presence*, in the courts of his house where his people used to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself. Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and whenever we have thanks to give, we must come before God's presence, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he hath appointed.

2. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise: we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart: We must praise God,

(1.) Because he is a great God, and sovereign Lord of all, ver. 3. He is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and hath all perfection in himself. 1. He has great power; *he is a great King above all gods*, above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, *Ye are gods*; he manageth them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable; above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can and will smite and vanquish them all. 2. He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly instanced in; we reckon those great men that have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe: how great then is that God, whose *the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof*; not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestible dominion over all the creatures, and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all, ver. 4. *even the deep places of the earth*, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, *are in his hand*; and *the height of the hills*, which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, *is his also*. This may be taken figuratively, the meanest of the children of men that are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognisance; and the greatest that are as the strength of the hills, are not above his controul. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and employed for him, ver. 5. *The sea is his*, and all that is in it; the waves fulfil his word: it is his, for he made it, gathered its waters, and fixed its shores; *the dry land*, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself: it is his, for *his hands formed it*, when his word made the dry land appear. His being the Creator of all makes him without dispute the Owner of all. This being a Gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus, whom we are here taught to praise; *he is a great God*, the mighty God is one of his titles, and *God over all, blessed for evermore*; as Mediator, he is *a great King above all gods*; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities and powers are

subject to him; *by him*, as the eternal Word, *all things were made*, John i. 3. and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in Heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both, Rev. x. 2. and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise; and before him we must worship and bow down.

(2.) Because he is our God; not only has a dominion over us as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us, ver. 7. *He is our God*, and therefore it is expected we should praise him; who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

1. He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must kneel before the Lord our maker, ver. 6. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God that made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

2. He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called the rock of our salvation, ver. 1. not only the founder but the very foundation of that work of wonder on whom it is built: *that rock is Christ*, to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, *to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb*.

3. We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; *we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*, all the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his Providence, which cares for them, and conducts them as the shepherd the sheep. We must therefore praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so: *Israel is the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*, and therefore he demands their homage, in a special manner. The gospel-church is his flock, Christ is the great and good shepherd of it; we as Christians are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for: to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be *glory in the churches*, whether it be in the world or no, throughout all ages, Eph. iii. 21.

7. — to day if ye will hear his voice, S. Harden not your heart as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. 11. Unto whom I swore in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing Gospel psalms to live Gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word, or otherwise how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises? Observe,

1. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he hath said, *my sheep hear my voice*, John x. 27. *We are his people*, say they. Are you so? then hear his voice: If you call him Master or Lord, then do the things which he saith, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, his law, and in both, of his Spirit, hear and heed; hear and yield. *Hear his voice*, and not the voice of a stranger. *If ye will hear his voice*! some take it as a wish, *O that ye would hear his voice*! that ye would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; as, *if thou hadst known*, Luke xix. 41. *i. e.* O that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to day; this the Apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the Gospel day. While he is speaking to you see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always, improve it therefore while it is called to day, Heb. iii. 13—15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing; to day, if by faith you accept the Gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing more dangerous than delay.

2. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. *If ye will hear his voice*, and profit by what ye hear, then do not harden your hearts: for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ, because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ nor yield to his demands; and if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, he hardening it himself, and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

3. The example they are warned by; which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness; take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan. *Be not as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*, Psalm lxxviii. 8. Thus here, *Harden not your hearts, as you did, i. e.* your ancestors, in the provocation, or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, Exod. xvii. 2—7. and in the day of temptation, in the wilderness, ver. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation or Massah, the other name given to that place, Exod. xvii. 7. because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* This was in the wilderness where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy: and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power, and tokens of his favour as never any people had before or since. Note, 1. Days of temptation are days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it; because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrust of God and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now here observe,

1. The charge drawn up in God's name against the unbelieving Israelites, ver. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill carriage towards him with the expressions of an high resentment. (1.) Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and proved him, *i. e.* they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon farther security before they would

would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power, and promised to make a captain return into Egypt, *Numb. xiv. 3, 4.* This is called *rebellion*, *Deut. i. 26-32.* (2.) The aggravation of this sin was that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from Heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them; with them, even seeing was not believing, because they *hardened their hearts*, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. (3.) The causes of their sin; see what God imputed it to, *It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways.* Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. 1. Of their ignorance, *they have not known my ways.* They saw his work, *ver. 9.* and he made known his acts to them, *Psalm ciii. 7.* and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his Providence, in which he walked towards them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him, they did not know, *i. e.* they did not rightly understand; and therefore did not approve of these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God, is because they do not know them. (2.) Of their mistake; *they do err in their heart*; they wander out of the way, in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart: such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. (3.) God's resentment of their sin; *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him: and God keeps an account how often (*Numb. xiv. 22.*) and how long they grieve him: for the patience of God towards provoking sinners: he is grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumphal entrance into Canaan, made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

2. The sentence passed upon them for their sin, *ver. 11.* *Unto whom I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter my rest, then say I am changeable and untrue;* see the sentence at large, *Numb. xiv. 21, &c.* Observe, 1. Whence this sentence came; from the wrath of God; he *swore solemnly in his wrath*, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry at sin and sinners, to shew the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such recompence of revenge as may be expected from a provoked deity. 2. What it was, *that the Lord should not enter into his rest*, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them; a settlement for them and theirs; that none of them who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt, should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan but Caleb and Joshua. 3. How it was ratified; I swore it. It was not only a purpose but a decree; the oath shewed the immutability of his counsel; the Lord *swore and will not repent*; and it cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy; God's threatnings are such as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's time when this psalm was penned: let them be warned by the voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest if they were still necked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the use of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, *This is my rest*; but it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it to us, *Hebrews iv. 1.* Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession at least) bound for it, yet many that seem to be so, come short, and shall never enter into it. What is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin, it is unbelief, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from it. Let us therefore fear, *Heb. iv. 1.*

P S A L M XCVI.

This psalm is part of that psalm which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, *1 Chron. xvi. 7.* by which it appears, both that it was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David; whether that long psalm was made first and this afterwards taken out of it, or this made first and that afterwards borrowed to make up that, is not certain. But this is certain, that though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks farther to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is, (1.) A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him as a great and glorious God, *ver. 1-9.* (2.) Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, *ver. 10-13.* In singing this psalm we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God and the grace of the Gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in Christ's sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

1. **SING** unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD all the earth. 2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day. 3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 6. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring offering and come into his courts. 9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his Majesty.

and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God,

1. With songs, *ver. 1, 2.* Three times we are here called to sing unto the Lord: sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, *is now*, in the church militant, and ever shall be in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often minded of it and stirred up to it. Sing unto the Lord, that is, *bless his name*, speak well of him that you may bring others to think well of him. (1.) Sing a new song, *i. e.* an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than an old song, but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours; for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old or vanish away: it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. (2.) Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, *Rev. xiv. 3.* This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it. (3.) Let the subject matter of this song be his salvation; the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be shewed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. (4.) Let these songs be sung constantly, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day: it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that under the influence of gospel devotions we may daily exemplify a gospel conversation.

2. With sermons, *ver. 3.* Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people. 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright; in shewing forth that salvation we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was, in the Old Testament times, as Heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fulness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of that even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people; the nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the gospel to every creature, is copied from this here; *Declare his glory among the heathen.*

3. With religious services, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* Hitherto, though in every nation they that feared God and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion; but in gospel times the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, *i. e.* to worship him according to his appointment. In every place incense shall be offered to his name, *Mal. i. 11.* *Zech. xiv. 17.* *Isa. lvi. 23.* This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing from us or any creature, which was not his own before; much less be benefited by it; but we must in our best affections, adorations and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for *God loves a cheerful giver.* It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and if not will be recovered, and yet if it come from holy love God is pleased to accept it as a gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly, *ver. 7.* Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion, so some. As a king he is clothed with robes and glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we subscribe to both; *Thine is the kingdom, and therefore thine is the power and the glory.* Give the glory to God, do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature. 3. We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, *i. e.* to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship this is that which we must aim at to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings, and the fountain of our being. 4. We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring ourselves in the first place: the offering up of the Gentiles, *Rom. xv. 16.* We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, *Heb. xiii. 15.* must often appear before God in public worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn assembly where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is their conformity to the rule: worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must fear before him: all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise.

The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised, *ver. 4.* and to be feared; great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and when the everlasting gospel is preached, this is it, *Fear God, and give glory to him*, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7.*

1. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him, *He is to be feared above all gods*; all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather as idols, *the gods of the nations*, *ver. 5.* All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders: he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing: So the word used for idols signifies; for we know that *an idol is nothing in the world*, *1 Cor. viii. 4.*

2. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him. The Lord made the heavens, and all their hosts, they are the work of his fingers, *Psal. viii. 3.* so nicely, so curiously are they made. The gods of the nations were all made-gods, the creatures of mens fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon and stars, those lights of Heaven which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such.

3. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world; among his angels in Heaven, and his saints on earth, *ver. 6.*

wickedness. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him; if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompense of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of; *Yea the Lord our God, who takes our part, and owns us for his, shall cut them off, from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.*

P S A L M XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, Heb. iii. and iv. where it appears both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, Heb. iv. 7. that the day here spoken of, ver. 7. is to be understood of the Gospel day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and propoeth to us a rest besides that of Canaan. In singing of psalms it is intended, 1. That we should make melody unto the Lord, and that we are here excited to do and assisted in doing; being called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 2. as a great God, ver. 3, 4, 5. and as our gracious benefactor, ver. 6, 7. 2. That we should teach and admonish ourselves, and one another; and we are here taught and warned to hear God's voice, ver. 7. and not to harden our hearts as the Israelites in the wilderness did, ver. 8, 9. lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest as they did, ver. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with an holy reverence of God's majesty and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.

1. **O** COME let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. 6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. 7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand:

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs himself up and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it and cold in it. Observe,

1. How God is to be praised. (1.) With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise: it is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him, as a being infinitely perfect and blessed we should at the same time rejoice in him, as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. (2.) With humble reverence, and a holy awe of him, ver. 6. *Let us worship and bow down and kneel before him*, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. (3.) We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; *Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him with psalms*; as those that are themselves much affected with his greatness and goodness are forward to own themselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affections in others also. (4.) We must praise God in concert, in solemn assemblies: *Come, let us sing*, let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone; but others with me. *Let us come together before his presence*, in the courts of his house where his people used to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself. Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and whenever we have thanks to give, we must come before God's presence, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he hath appointed.

2. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise: we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart: We must praise God,

(1.) Because he is a great God, and sovereign Lord of all, ver. 3. He is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and hath all perfection in himself. 1. He has great power; *he is a great King above all gods*, above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he saith, *I am gods*; he manageth them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable; above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can and will famish and vanquish them all. 2. He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly instanced in; we reckon those great men that have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe: how great then is that God, whose the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof; not only under whose feet it is, as he has an uncontested dominion over all the creatures, and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all, ver. 4. *even the deep places of the earth*, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, *are in his hand*; and *the height of the hills*, which are out of our reach, whatever grows or seeds upon them, *is his also*. This may be taken figuratively, the meanness of the children of men that are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest that are as the strength of the hills, are not above his controul. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and employed for him, ver. 5. *The sea is his*, and all that is in it; the waves fulfil his word: it is his, for he made it, gathered its waters, and fixed its shores; *the dry land*, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself: it is his, for his hands formed it, when his word made the dry land appear. His being the Creator of all makes him without dispute the Owner of all. This being a Gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus, whom we are here taught to praise; *he is a great God*, the mighty God is one of his titles, and *God over all, blessed for evermore*; as Mediator, he is *a great King above all gods*; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities and powers are

subject to him; *by him*, as the eternal Word, *all things were made*, John i. 3. and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in Heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both, Rev. x. 2. and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise; and before him we must worship and bow down.

(2.) Because he is our God; not only has a dominion over us as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us, ver. 7. *He is our God*, and therefore it is expected we should praise him; who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

1. He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must kneel before the Lord our maker, ver. 6. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God that made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

2. He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called the rock of our salvation, ver. 1. not only the founder but the very foundation of that work of wonder on whom it is built: *that rock is Christ*, to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, *to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb*.

3. We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; *we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*, all the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his Providence, which cares for them, and conducts them as the shepherd the sheep. We must therefore praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so: *Israel is the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*, and therefore he demands their homage, in a special manner. The gospel-church is his flock, Christ is the great and good shepherd of it; we as Christians are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for; to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be glory in the churches, whether it be in the world or no, throughout all ages, Eph. iii. 21.

7. — to day if ye will hear his voice, S. Harden not your heart as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. 11. Unto whom I swore in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing Gospel psalms to live Gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word, or otherwise how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises? Observe,

1. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he hath said, *my sheep hear my voice*, John x. 27. *We are his people*, say they. Are you so? then hear his voice: If you call him Master or Lord, then do the things which he saith, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, his law, and in both, of his Spirit, hear and heed; hear and yield. *Hear his voice*, and not the voice of a stranger. *If ye will hear his voice*! some take it as a wish, *O that ye would hear his voice*! that ye would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; as, *if thou hadst known*, Luke xix. 41. *i. e.* O that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to day; this the Apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the Gospel day. While he is speaking to you see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always, improve it therefore while it is called to day, Heb. iii. 13—15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing; to day, if by faith you accept the Gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing more dangerous than delay.

2. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. *If ye will hear his voice*, and profit by what ye hear, then do not harden your hearts: for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ, because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ nor yield to his demands; and if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, he hardening it himself, and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

3. The example they are warned by; which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness; take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan. *Be not as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*, Psalm lxxviii. 8. Thus here, *Harden not your hearts, as you did, i. e.* your ancestors, in the provocation, or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, *Exod. xvii. 2—7. and in the day of temptation, in the wilderness*, ver. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation or Massa, the other name given to that place, *Exod. xvii. 7.* because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* This was in the wilderness where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy: and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power, and tokens of his favour as never any people had before or since. Note, 1. Days of temptation are days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it; because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrust of God and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now here observe,

1. The charge drawn up in God's name against the unbelieving Israelites, ver. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill carriage towards him with the expressions of an high resentment. (1.) Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and proved him, *i. e.* they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further security before they would

would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promise, and would make a captain return into Egypt, *Numb. xiv. 3, 4.* This is called *rebellion*, *Deut. i. 26—32.* (2.) The aggravation of this sin was that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt; nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from Heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them; with them, even seeing was not believing, because they *hardened their hearts*, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. (3.) The causes of their sin; see what God imputed it to, *It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways.* Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. 1. Of their ignorance, *they have not known my ways.* They saw his work, *ver. 9.* and he made known his acts to them, *Psalm ciii. 7.* and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his Providence, in which he walked towards them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him, they did not know, *i. e.* they did not rightly understand; and therefore did not approve of these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God, is because they do not know them. (2.) Of their mistake; *they do err in their heart*; they wander out of the way, in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. (3.) God's resentment of their sin; *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him; and God keeps an account how often (*Numb. xiv. 22.*) and how long they grieve him; for the patience of God towards provoking sinners: he was grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumph; at entrance into Canaan, made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

2. The sentence passed upon them for their sin, *ver. 11.* *Unto whom I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter my rest, then say I am changeable and untrue: see the sentence at large, Numb. xiv. 23, &c.* Observe, 1. Whence this sentence came: from the wrath of God; he *swore solemnly in his wrath*, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not so subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry at sin and sinners, to shew the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such recompence of revenge as may be expected from a provoked deity. 2. What it was, *that they should not enter into his rest*, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them; a settlement for them and theirs; that none of them who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt, should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan but Caleb and Joshua. 3. How it was ratified; I swore it. It was not only a purpose but a decree; the oath shewed the immutability of his counsel; the Lord *swore and will not repent*; and it cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy; God's threat words are such as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's time when this psalm was penned: let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest if they were still-necked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, *This is my rest*; but it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it: there is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession at least) bound for this rest, yet many that seem to be so, come short, and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin, it is unbelief, against the remedy, against our appeal. They that like Israel distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest: so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it. *Let us therefore*

and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God,

1. With songs, *ver. 1, 2.* Three times we are here called to sing unto the Lord: sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was *in the beginning*, when the morning stars sang together, *Isa. vi.* in the church militant, and ever shall be in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often minded of it and stirred up to it. Sing unto the Lord, that is, *bless his name*, speak well of him that you may bring others to think well of him. (1.) Sing a new song, *i. e.* an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than an old song, but the novelty of a song recommends it; for there we expect something furnishing. A new song is a song for new favours, for those communications which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old or vanish away: it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. (2.) Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, *Rev. xiv. 3.* This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles: all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both ears and eyes to sing it. (3.) Let the subject matter of this song be his salvation: the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that and be shewed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. (4.) Let these songs be sung continually, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day: it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that under the influence of gospel devotions we may daily exemplify a gospel conversation.

2. With sermons, *ver. 3.* *Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people.* 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright; in shewing forth that salvation we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was, in the Old Testament times, as Heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fullness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of that even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people: the nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the gospel to every creature, is copied from this here; *Declare his glory among the heathen.*

3. With religious services, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* Hitherto, though in every nation they that feared God and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion: but in gospel times the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, *i. e.* to worship him according to his appointment. *In every place incense shall be offered to his name.* *Mal. i. 11.* *Zech. xiv. 17.* *Uta. lvi. 23.* This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing from us or any creature, which was not his own before; much less be benefited by it: but we must in our best affections, adorations and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for *God loves a cheerful giver.* It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and if not will be recovered, and yet if it come from holy love God is pleased to accept it as a gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly, *ver. 7.* *Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion, so some.* As a king he is clothed with robes and glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we subscribe to both; *Thine is the kingdom*, and therefore *thine is the power and the glory*: Give the glory to God, do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature. 3. We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, *i. e.* to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship this is that which we must aim at to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings, and the fountain of our being. 4. We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring ourselves in the first place: the offering up of the Gentiles, *Rom. xv. 16.* We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, *Heb. xiii. 15.* must often appear before God in public worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn assembly where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is their conformity to the rule: worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must fear before him; all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise.

The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised, *ver. 4.* and to be feared; great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and when the everlasting gospel is preached, this is it, *Fear God, and give glory to him*, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7.*

1. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him, *He is to be feared above all gods*; all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather all idols, *the gods of the nations*, *ver. 5.* All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders: he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing: So the word used for idols signifies; for we know that *an idol is nothing in the world*, *1 Cor. viii. 4.*

2. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him. *The Lord made the heavens*, and all their hosts, they are the work of his fingers, *Psal. viii. 3.* so nicely, so curiously are they made. The gods of the nations were all made-gods, the creatures of mens fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon and stars, those lights of Heaven which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such.

3. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world; among his angels in Heaven, and his saints on earth, *ver. 6.* *Splendor*

P S A L M XCVI.

This psalm is part of that psalm which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, *1 Chron. xvi. 7.* by which it appears, both that it was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David; whether that long psalm was made first and this afterwards taken out of it, or this made first and the other afterwards borrowed to make up that, is not certain. But this is certain, that though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks further to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is, (1.) A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him as a great and glorious God, *ver. 1—9.* (2.) Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, *ver. 10—13.* In singing this psalm we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God and the grace of the Gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in his sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

1. **SING** unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD all the earth. 2. Sing unto the LORD, blest his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day. 3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 6. Honour and majesty before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring offering and come into his courts. 9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout persons working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his Majesty

Splendor and majesty are before him, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary, both that above and this below. In God there is every thing that is awful, and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary we shall behold his beauty, for God is love: and experience his strength, for he is our rock. Let us therefore go forth in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

10. Say among the heathen, that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved; he shall judge the people righteously. 11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. 13. Before the LORD, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations, what to preach, or to those who had themselves received the gospel, what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to say among the heathen; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, which began presently after his ascension, and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

1. Let it be told, that the Lord reigneth, the Lord Christ reigneth, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said among the heathen by Peter, Acts x. 42. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, *The Lord reigneth from the tree*; so Justin Martyr, Auslin, and others quote it; meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, *The King of the Jews*: it was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to enquire after him that was born King of the Jews, Matt. ii. 2. Now let them know that he is come, and his kingdom is set up.

2. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement; *The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved*. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, is owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it, but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, (so some) that it cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

3. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestibly just and righteous; *He shall judge the people righteously*, ver. 10. *judge the world with righteousness, and with his truth*, ver. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31. yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He saith himself, *For judgment am I come into this world*, John ix. 19.—xii. 31. and that *all judgment was committed to him*, John v. 22—27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth, signifies, 1. That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the divine nature and will. 2. That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he hath said. 3. That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth; and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, *Art thou a King?* He answered, *For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, John xviii. 37. for he kings it by truth, commands men's will by informing their judgments aright.

4. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh; that this King, this Judge, standeth before the door, for he cometh, for he cometh. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, Jude xiv. Betwixt this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, *Behold, he comes in the clouds*, Rev. i. 7. and yet he is not come. See 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c.

5. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand, ver. 11, 12. *Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood*. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, 1. That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and as far as his grace and government are submitted to, they will bring joy along with them: we have reason to give that place, that soul joy, into which Christ is admitted. See an instance of both, Acts viii. when Samaria received the gospel, *there was great joy in that city*, ver. 8. and when the eunuch was baptized, *he went on his way rejoicing*, ver. 39. 2. That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for though it comes conquering and to conquer, yet it comes peaceably. *Hosannah, Blessed is he that cometh*; and again, *Hosannah, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David*, Mark xi. 9, 10. not only let the daughter of Zion rejoice that her King comes, Zech. ix. 9. but let all rejoice. 3. That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even the sea, and the field; for as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the grace of the second Adam, it shall some way or other, first or last, be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 20, 21. 4. That there will in the first place be joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God, for when the first begotten was brought into the world, they sung their anthems to his praise, Luke ii. 14. 5. That God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. *The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can shew that they rejoice*, I know not; but he that searcheth the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest.

P S A L M XCVII.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the alpha and omega of both; they

are both penned, and are both to be sung to his honour; and we make nothing of them, if we do not in them make melody with our hearts to the Lord Jesus. He it is that reigns to the joy of all mankind, ver. 1. and his government speaks, 1. Terror to his enemies; for he is a prince of inflexible justice, and irresistible power, ver. 2—7. 2. Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects, arising from his sovereign dominion; the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, ver. 8—12. In singing this psalm we must be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer, must dread the lot of his enemies, and think ourselves happy, if we are of those that kiss the Son.

1. THE LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. 2. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. 5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD: at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth. 6. The heavens declare his righteousness: and all the people see his glory. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm, ver. 10. is here said again, ver. 1. and is made the subject of this psalm, and of psalm xcix. *The Lord reigns*; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being, gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event; every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs both public and private, he performeth the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twined in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ; who therefore is both the head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

The kingdom of Christ is so constituted, as that, 1. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so if it be not their own fault. *Let the earth rejoice*, for hereby it is established, Psal. xcvi. 10. it is honoured and enriched, and in part rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him, as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation: for the kingdoms of the world shall more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdom: *let the multitudes of isles, the many of great isles, be glad thereof*. This speaks the language of our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; however, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room.

All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. (1.) In the equity of it: There is an incontestible justice in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial: sometimes indeed clouds and darkness are round about him, his dispensations are altogether unaccountable; his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters; we are not aware what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government; there is a depth in his counsels which we must not pretend to fathom; but still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; a golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is the habitation of his throne. His commandments are, and will be, all righteous. Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne; (so Dr. Hammond) for therefore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, Psal. xlv. 6. The throne is established in righteousness. Even the heavens declare his righteousness, ver. 6. i. e. it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government, and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is incontestible, for who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? Psal. l. 6.

(2.) In the extent of it in the upper and lower world. 1. All the men on earth are under his government; either he is served by them, or he serveth himself by them. *All the people see his glory*, or may see it. The glory of God in the face of Christ was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less among all people; the gospel was preached for ought we know in all languages, Acts ii. 5—11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so all the people saw his glory. Have they not heard? Rom. x. 18.

2. All the angels in heaven are so; perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words, ver. 7. *Worship him all ye gods*, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world, at the ascension, with this charge, Heb. i. 6. *Let all the angels of God worship him*: which helps us to a key to this whole psalm, and shews us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth; angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ, that he hath such worshippers; and the honour of all good christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

3. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, yet will be matter of terror to some, and it is long of themselves that it is so, ver. 3, 4, 5—7. Observe,

(1.) When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns to the joy of the whole earth, yet as he has his subjects, so he hath his enemies, ver. 3. that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all; that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Matt. xxiii. 13. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called hills, ver. 5. for their height and strength, and immoveable obstinacy. They were the princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. Psal. ii. 1.

(2.) The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom, turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting the apostles, and forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles, filled up their sin, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared,

pared, 1. 'To consuming fire, which goes before him, and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briars and thorns before him in battle, Isa. xxvii. 4. This fire of divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, ver. 5. When our God appears as a consuming fire, even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very presence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is the Lord of the whole earth, by whom all the children of men are manageable, and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent, that the Lord has forsaken the earth; but when he manifests his presence they melt. 2. To amazing lightnings, ver. 4. which strike a terror upon many. The judgments of God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom were such as all the world took notice of with terror; The earth saw and trembled, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which like fire wholly destroyed that people, and like lightning astonished all their neighbours, Dent. xxix. 24. but the heavens declared God's righteousness in it, and all the people to this day see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice the scattered Jews.

(5.) Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom, ver. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, i. e. the Gentile world, who did service to them that by nature are no gods, Gal. 4. 8. who boast themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did they that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? Let them be ashamed that serve graven images. 1. This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may by the power of Christ's Gospel be brought to serve the only living and true God; and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them. See Isa. ii. 20, 21. 2. This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of Paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about three hundred years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters, that some think it was the revolution under Constantine, that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us, Rev. vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy is still in force against antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom; Confounded be all they that worship graven images. See Jer. xlviii. 13.

8. Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced: because of thy judgments, O LORD. 9. For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. 10. Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his faithfuls, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 12. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous: and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it hath a dark side towards the Egyptians, so it has a bright side towards the Israel of God. It is set up in spite of opposition; and then the earth saw and trembled, ver. 4. but Zion heard and was glad, very glad to hear of the conversion of some, and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: for behold thy king comes unto thee, Zech. ix. 9. And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even the daughters of Judah rejoiced, the common people, the inhabitants of the villages. They shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command, ver. 1. is, Let the earth rejoice: but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

1. The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad.

(1.) Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice because of thy judgments, O LORD; which may take in both the judgments of his mouth, and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel, and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, Thou, LORD, art high above all the earth, ver. 9. thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art exalted far above all gods, all deputed gods, that is, princes; all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, is the rejoicing of all the faithfuls.

(2.) Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King, shall be sure of his protection; princes are the shields of the earth, Christ is so to his subjects, they may put their trust under his shadow, and rejoice in it; for, ver. 10. He preserveth the souls of the faithfuls; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked, their persecutors, that thirst after their blood; for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithfuls. But something more is meant than their lives, for they that will be his disciples, must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indolent for the securing of them: it is the immortal soul that Christ preserves, the inward man, which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays. He will preserve the souls of his faithfuls from sin, from apostasy and despair, under their greatest trials; he will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one that seeks to devour them; he will preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad being thus safe.

(3.) Because provision is made for their comfort; those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later, ver. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, that is, gladness for the upright in heart. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and may not share by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know to their comfort that light is sown for them, it is designed and prepared for them; what is sown will come up again in due time; though like a winter seedness it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. They that sow in tears, shall without fail reap in joy, Psal. cxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his faithfuls at parting, John xvi. 20. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart, to those

only that are sincere in religion: The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity.

2. The rules that are given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy; ye that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom; that love his word and his exaltation; see that ye hate evil, and evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him, and will throw you out of his favour. Note, A true love to God will show itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of their faithfuls should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin, and divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste to sensual pleasures.

2. Let the joy terminate in God, ver. 12. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; let all the streams of comfort, which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the fountain, and oblige us to rejoice in the Lord, All the lines of joy must meet in him as in the centre. See Phil. iii. 1.—iv. 4.

3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving; Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and particularly the holiness of God. They that hate sin themselves are glad that God doth so, in hopes that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note, 1. We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude, and perfection of the divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he hath confirmed with an oath by his holiness. 2. We ought to give thanks upon the remembrance of his holiness: not only give him the glory of it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us, and an unspeakable favour it will be if through grace we are partakers of his holiness. It is God's holiness, which above all his attributes the angels celebrate, Isa. vi. 3. Holy, holy, holy. Sinners tremble, but faithfuls rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness, Psal. xxx. 5.

P S A L M XC VIII.

This psalm is to the same purpose with the two foregoing psalms; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting up in the world, and the bringing in of the Gentiles to it. The Church intitles it a prophetic psalm. It sets forth, (1.) The glory of the Redeemer, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The joy of the redeemed, ver. 4—9. If we in a right manner give to Christ this glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy in singing this psalm, we sing it with understanding. And if they then, who see Christ's glory at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, that see these things accomplished, and share in the better things provided for us, Heb. xi. 40.

A PSALM.

1. **O** SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, have gotten him the victory. 2. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

We are here called upon again to sing unto the Lord a new song, as before, Psal. xcvi. 1. Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have. Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, a song of songs. A song of praise for redeeming love is a new song, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder, and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart in our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung that will be new to eternity, and never wax old.

Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things.

1. The wonders he hath wrought, he hath done marvellous things, ver. 1. Note, The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it done marvellous things, it is all his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

2. The conquests he has won; His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. Our redeemer hath surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, hath broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services of sufferings appointed him. He hath subdued all the enemies that oppose it, hath gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong holds, hath spoiled principalities and powers, Col. ii. 15. has taken the prey for the mighty, Isa. xlv. 24. and given death his death's wound; he hath gotten a clear and compleat victory, not only for himself but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power, there was none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service; but his right hand and his holy arm, which is therefore always stretched out with good success, because it is never stretched out but in a good cause; this has gotten him the victory, hath brought him relief or deliverance (so Dr. Hammond.) God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God: so he applies it.

3. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he hath wrought for us he hath revealed to us, and both by his Son; the Gospel revelation is that on which the Gospel kingdom is founded; The word which God sent, Acts x. 30. The opening of the sealed book, is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise, Rev. v. 8. because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, (1) The subject of this discovery. His salvation and his righteousness, ver. 3. Righteousness and salvation are often put together: as Isa. xli. 10.—xlv. 13.—li. 5, 6—8. Salvation speaks the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ: Or, the salvation includes all our gospel privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel duties; both are made known, for God hath joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Rom. i. 17. (2) The plainness of this discovery; he hath openly shewed it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sun-beam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. (3.) The extent of this discovery;

very : It is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only ; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God, for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

4. The accomplishment of the prophecies, and the promises of the Old Testament in this, *ver. 3.* He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of kindness he designed them in the latter days, and it was in pursuance of all those that he raised up his son Jesus, to be not only a light to lighten the Gentiles, but the glory of his people Israel, for he sent them in the first place to bless them. God is said in sending Christ to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant, Luke i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

4. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth : make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5. Sing unto the LORD with the harp : with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6. With trumpets and found of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof : the world, and they that dwell therein. 8. Let the floods clap their hands : let the hills be joyful, together. 9. Before the LORD ; for he cometh to judge the earth : with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

1. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have or may have benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy in it, and give God praise for it. *Make a joyful noise*, as before, *Psalm xcvi. 1.* *Make a loud noise*, as those that are affected with those glad tidings, and are desirous to affect others with them ; *Rejoice and sing praise*, sing *Hosannah*, Matt. xxi. 9. sing *Hallelujahs*, Rev. xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne as new kings use to be with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, *1 Kings i. 40.* And let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with the *singers and players on instruments*, *Psalm lxxxviii. 7.—lxxxviii. 20.* as is usual in such solemnities. 1. Let sacred songs attend the new king, *sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm.* Express your joy, thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others. 2. Let these be assisted with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but since it is a victorious king, whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet *ver. 6.* Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner ; *make a joyful noise to the Lord*, *ver. 4.* *Sing to the Lord*, *ver. 5.* do it before the Lord, the King, *ver. 6.* Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy : When David danced before the ark, he pleaded, *it was before the Lord* ; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice before the Lord, whenever we draw near to him, *Deut. xii. 12.* before the Lord Jesus, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

2. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* This is to the same purpose with what we had before, *Psalm xcvi. 11, 12, 13.* Let the sea roar, and let that be called, not as it used to be, a dreadful noise, but a joyful noise ; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, hath quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods lift up their voice, lift up their waves, we must not construe that to be the sea roaring against us, but rather rejoicing with us. Let the floods express their joy as men do when they clap their hands : and let the hills that tremble for fear before God, when he came down to give the law at mount Sinai, dance for joy before him when his gospel is preached, and that word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still small voice. Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord. This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation ; but that as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator, (*Psalm xix. 1.*) so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only subsist in their being but consist in their order. It intimates likewise, that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore he must look for his honour from the sea and the floods, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And perhaps respect is here had to the new heavens and the new earth, which we yet according to his promise look for, *2 Pet. iii. 13.* and this second mention of his coming, after the like *Psalm xcvi.* may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined, then shall he come to judge the world with righteousness ; and in prospect of that day all that are sanctified to rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills would rejoice if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cumean Sybil, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies, which at that time were expected to be fulfilled, for he lived in the reign of Augustus Caesar, a little before our Saviour's birth : He owns they looked for the birth of a child from Heaven that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age.

Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto,
that should take away sin ;

Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.

Many other things he saith of this long looked for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein :

Aspice, venturo latenter ut amnia sæclo.
And if all rejoice, why should not we ?

P S A L M XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms ; but those psalms looked forward to the times of the gospel, and prophecied of the graces and comforts of those times ; this psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old Testament dispensation, and the manifestation of God's glory and grace in that. Let not men, in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom and the evangelical worship, neglect that divine regimen they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them see God reigning, and worship before him according to the law

of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come, must not lessen our esteem of good things present. To Israel indeed pertained the promises which they must believe ; but to them pertained also the giving of the law and the service of God, which they must also dutifully and conscientiously attend to, Rom. ix. 4. And this they are called to do in this psalm ; where yet there is much of Christ, for the government of the church was in the hands of the eternal Word before he was incarnate ; and besides the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him in consideration of these two things, (1.) The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) Some instances of the happy administration of it, *ver. 6—9.* In singing of this psalm we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel, which we have much more reason to do than they had that lived under the law.

1. **T**HE LORD reigneth ; let the people tremble : he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved. 2. The LORD is great in Zion ; and he is high above all the people. 3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name : for it is holy. 4. The king's strength also loveth judgment ; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5. Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool : for he is holy.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, that the Lord reigneth : God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that the Lord liveth, but that the Lord reigneth. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church that Jehovah was their king ; and hence it is inferred, *Let the people tremble*, i. e. 1. Even let the subjects of this kingdom tremble, for the Old Testament dispensation had much of terror in it, at mount Sinai, Israel, and even Moses himself did exceedingly fear and quake ; and then God was terrible in his holy places, even when he appeared in his people's behalf, he did terrible things. But we are not now come to that mount that burned with fire, Heb. xii. 18. Now the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice : then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. 2. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble, for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre, or crush them with his iron rod. The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation at it ; though they fret their hearts out, their rage is all in vain, he will set his kingdom upon his holy hill of Zion in despite of them, *Psalm ii. 1—6.* first or last he will make them tremble, Rev. vi. 15. &c. The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved. Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved. *Psalm xcvi. 10.* but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken and all nations ; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved ; the things which cannot be shaken shall remain, Heb. xii. 27. In these is continuance, Isa. lxiv. 5.

God's kingdom set up in Israel is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

1. God presided in the affairs of religion ; He sitteth between the cherubims, *ver. 1.* as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered ; as on the mercy-seat to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the Shechinah, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels ; the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of Holies was the presence-chamber. The Lord is great in Zion, *ver. 2.* there he is known and praised, *Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2.* there he is served as great, more than any where else ; he is high there above all people ; as that which is high is exposed to view and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore let them that dwell in Zion, and worship there, praise thy great and terrible name, and give thee the glory due unto it, for it is holy. The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends, and terrible to his enemies, *ver. 3.* This is that which they above adore, *Holy, holy, holy.*

2. He was all in all in their civil government, *ver. 4.* As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither the tribes went up, so there were set thrones of judgment, *Psalm cxii. 4, 5.* their government was a theocracy : he raised up David to rule over them, (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne) and he is the king whose strength loveth judgment : he is strong, all his strength he has from God, and his strength is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it loveth judgment ; he doth justice with his power, and doth it with delight : and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice : he hath power to crush, but his strength loves judgment, i. e. he doth not rule with vigour, but with moderation, with wisdom and tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king ; but they are here taught to look up to God, as he by whom their king reigns. Thou dost establish equity, i. e. God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed ; and thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob, i. e. he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him, and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, *2 Chron. xix. 6.*

Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it, *Deut. iv. 7, 8.* that they had God so nigh unto them, sitting between the cherubims ; and that they had statutes and judgments so righteous, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob : from which he infers this command to that happy people, *ver. 5.* Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool : give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established both in church and state. Note, 1. The greater the public mercies are which we have a share in, the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God : the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise. 2. When we draw nigh to God to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. 3. The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must worship at his footstool, i. e. at his ark, which was as the footstool on the mercy-seat between the cherubims ; or, we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts ; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, for he is holy ; and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it doth on the angels themselves, *Isa. vi. 2, 3.*

6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name : they called upon

upon the LORD, and he answered them. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar; they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. 8. Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. 9. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the LORD our God is holy.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially with reference to those that were in their day the prime leaders, and most active useful governors of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy or divine government began; for they were employed to form Israel into a people, and in the last of whom that form of government in a great measure ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately their king as he had been, 1 Sam. viii. 7. for now they would have a king like all the nations. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be among his priests, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his son; therefore the Jews call him the Priest of the priests.

Now concerning these three chief rulers. Observe,

1. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with heaven, and whom God knew by name, Exod. xxxiii. 17.

Here is, (1.) Their gracious observance of God: no kingdom had men that honoured God so as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, 1. By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was among them that called on his name; and for this they were all famous, they called upon the Lord, they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, towards him was their desire, and on him their dependence. 2. By their obedience: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them, i. e. they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing that unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Prov. xviii. 9. Moses did all according to pattern shewed him; it is often repeated, According to all that God commanded Moses; so did he: Aaron and Samuel did likewise. Those were the greatest men and most honourable, that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies, and conforming to the rule of his word.

(2.) God's gracious acceptance of them: he answered them, and granted them the things which they called upon him for; they all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converseth with another, ver. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar. He often spake to Samuel, from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him, and probably sometimes he spake to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him; however to Moses and Aaron he often spake out of the famous cloudy pillar, Exod. xvi. 10. Numb. xii. 5. Israel is now minded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to them that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

2. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead; and when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1 Sam. vii. 9. This is here referred to, ver. 8. Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God, and, at their prayer, thou wast a God that forgavest the people they prayed for; and though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people as their sin deserved. Thou wast a God that wast propitious for them, (so Dr. Hammond) for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, then, when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, i. e. when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them, that it was just ready to break in upon them to their utter overthrow. These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God, ver. 9. Exalt the Lord our God, on account of what he hath done for us formerly, as well as of late, and worship at his holy hill of Zion on which he hath now set his temple, and will shortly set his King. Psalm ii. 6. the former a type of the latter: there, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations; for the Lord our God is holy, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel.

P S A L M C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express and to excite pious and devout affections towards God in our approach to him in holy ordinances: and if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps it was; but we say, that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their economy, so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God, plainly extends it to the Gospel church. Here, 1. We are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, ver. 1, 2-4. 2. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, ver. 3. and his mercy and truth, ver. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

A PSALM OF PRAISE.

1. **M**AKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2. Serve the LORD, with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5. For the LORD is good, his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations.

Here, 1. The exhortations to praise are very importunate: the psalm doth indeed answer the title, A psalm of praise; it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with, ver. 1. *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, or all the earth*, all the inhabitants of the earth. When all nations shall be disciplined, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom, which they were under (as the four before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah) this psalm perhaps was intended for profelytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews religion. However, we have here,

(1.) A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should serve the Lord, should devote ourselves to his service, and employ ourselves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should come before his presence in the ordinances which he has appointed, and in which he hath promised to manifest himself, ver. 2. that we should enter into his gates, and into his courts, ver. 3. that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates, and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into his holy place, there the priests only went in to minister; but let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house to which they were admitted, and gave their attendance there.

(2.) Great encouragement given us in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully, ver. 2. *Serve the Lord with gladness*. This intimates a prediction that in Gospel times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship; let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness; we must be willing and forward to it: glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord, Psalm cxxii. 1. looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God, and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, *It is good to be here*; approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding joy, Psalm xliii. 4. We must come before his presence in singing, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise, ver. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving; and must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. Be thankful to him, and bless his name; that is, 1. We must take it as a favour, to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted, and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances. 2. We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services: this golden thread must run through every duty, Heb. xiii. 15. for it is the work of angels. In every thing give thanks; in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

2. The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important, ver. 3-5. Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you? Note, Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience: blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. Know it, i. e. consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious in the worship of him. Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. That the Lord he is God, the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being: he is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent; the first cause, and last end. The heathen worshipped the creatures of their own fancy; the workman made it, therefore it is not God; we worship him that made us and all the world; he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he hath triumphed over.

2. That he is our Creator: *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves*. I find that I am, but cannot say, *I am that I am*; and therefore must ask whence am I? Who made me? Where is God my Maker? And it is the Lord Jehovah: He gave us being, gave us this being, is both the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our Spirits. We did not, we could not make ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own cause, our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore he is our rightful Owner. The Massorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, *He made us, and his we are*, or *to him we belong*. Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own, but his. He hath an incontestible right to, and property in us and all things. His we are, to be acted by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory.

4. That he is our sovereign Ruler: *We are his people* or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives law to us as mortal agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver*; we are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are hidden.

5. That he is our bountiful Benefactor; we are not only his sheep whom he is entitled to, but the sheep of his pasture, whom he takes care of. The flock of his feeding, so it may be read, therefore the sheep of his hand, at his dispose, because the sheep of his pasture, Psalm xcvi. 7. He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness, ver. 5. *The Lord is good*, and therefore doth good; his mercy is everlasting; it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry; the saints that are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be to eternity the glorified monuments of mercy.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness: *His truth endureth to all generations*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked; the promise is sure to all the seed from age to age.

P S A L M CI.

David was for certain the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow he made to God when he took upon him the charge of a family and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government immediately after the death of Saul, as some think, or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David, as others think, is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and by that means good order in it: but it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as make it a terror to evil doers, but a praise to them that do

do well. Here is, 1. The general scope of David's vow, ver. 1, 2. 2. The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness, ver. 3, 4, 5—7, 8. and that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous, ver. 8. Some think this may fully be accommodated to Christ, the Son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by those rules, and who loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness. In singing this psalm, families, both governors and governed, should teach and admonish, and engage themselves and one another to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them, and God's presence with them.

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **I** WILL sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. 2. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. 4. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer. 6. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 8. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate and a good master of a family; and if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to an universal reformation. Observe,

1. The chosen subject of the psalm, ver. 1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment*; that is, (1.) Of God's mercy and judgment; and then it looks back upon the dispensations of providence that had been concerning him since he was first anointed to be king; during which time he had met with many a rebuke, and much hardship on the one hand, and yet on the other hand had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him, and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note, 1. God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed both of mercy and judgments; God hath set the one over against the other, and appointed them April days, showers and sunshines. It was so with David and his family, when there was mercy in the return of the ark, there was judgment in the death of Uzza. 2. When God in his providence exerciseth us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee paraphrase of this is observable; *If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or if thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymns for all*; whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him, neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or, (2.) It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would in this psalm promise to be merciful and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly, and love mercy is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in this place and relation to which God had called him; and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had been concerning him. Family mercies, and family afflictions, are both of them calls to family religion. David puts his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind, and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others, and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

2. The general resolution David took up to carry himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, ver. 2. We have here, 1. A good purpose concerning his conversation; concerning his conversation in general, how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at any adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant bind himself to his good behaviour; and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat in the throne; but how he would walk within his house, where he was more out of the eyes of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad, and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are in public stations, are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay rather, they are most concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well, 1 Tim. iii. 5. when David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He resolves, (1.) To act conscientiously, and with integrity, to walk in a perfect way, i. e. in the way of God's commandments, that is a perfect way; for the law of the Lord is perfect. This he will walk in with a perfect heart, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it; then we walk in a perfect way, with a perfect heart. (2.) To act considerately, and with discretion; *I will behave myself wisely*; *I will understand or instruct myself in a perfect way*, so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of christian prudence, in the ways of christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of behaving ourselves wisely; but while we keep to the good way we must be wise as serpents. Here is a good prayer: *O when wilt thou come unto me!* Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man hath a house of his own, to have God come to him, and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with a perfect heart, in a perfect way. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain: David, as he purposed, behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and, as he prayed, the Lord was with him.

3. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself, ver. 3. *I will set no wicked things before mine eyes*, i. e. I will not design or aim at any thing

but what is for the glory of God, and the public welfare: he will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, to enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business we must first that that be right and good which we set our eyes upon and not any forbidden fruit; and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man, that he shuts his eyes from seeing of evil, Isa. xxviii. 15. Nay, I hate the work of them that turn aside from the paths of equity, Job xxxi. 7. not only I avoid it, but I abhor it, it shall not cleave to me: if any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly.

4. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious: he will not countenance them, nor shew them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him: for they would certainly hinder every thing that is good, who did themselves hate to be reformed.

When he comes to instance in particulars, he doth not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house; nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he instanceth in those sinners, who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution, and to behave himself wisely.

(1.) He will have nothing to do with spiteful malicious people, that are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against, ver. 4. *A froward heart*, one that delights to be cross and perverse, shall depart from me, as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. *I will not know*, i. e. I will have no acquaintance or conversation if I can help it, with such a wicked person; for little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump.

(2.) Nor with slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbours' reputation secretly, ver. 5. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour*, either raises or spreads false stories to the prejudice of his good name, him I will cut off from my family and court. Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince: *If a ruler hears to lies, all his servants are wicked*, Prov. xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will balk the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him: he will punish not only those that falsely accuse one another in open court, but that privily slander another. I wish David remembered this vow in the case of Abiathar and Ziba.

(3.) Nor with haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church; for only by pride comes contention; therefore him that hath an high look, and a proud heart, will I not suffer; I will have no patience with them that are still grasping at all preferments; for it is certain they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families. God rebuffs the proud, and so will David.

(4.) Nor with a false deceitful people, that make no conscience of a lie or a fraud, ver. 7. *he that worketh deceit*, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet as soon as he is discovered, he shall not dwell within my house. Some great men know how to serve their own purposes, by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such as agents for him. *He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight*, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart; for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will in the great day banish from his presence all that love and make a lie, Rev. xxii. 15.

(5.) His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good, ver. 6. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land*. In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel, and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those, such as were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land; for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out; for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them, and act under them. *He that walks in a perfect way*, that makes conscience of what he saith or doth, he shall serve me; the kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and if any man were better than other, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it, or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Abiathar his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sake and their childrens, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The son of David has his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodliness, 1 Sam. viii. 16. but David for their goodness.

Lastly, His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court, ver. 8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land*, i. e. all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them. He would do his utmost to destroy all the wicked, so as that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked; he would do it early, i. e. he would lose no time, and spare no pains, he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do any thing to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at, was not only the securing of his own government, and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*: Not Jerusalem only, but the whole land was the city of the Lord: so is the gospel church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can in their places towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the new Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

P S A L M CII.

Some think David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet, penned it for the use of the church, when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruins of Sion, and of a time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood by books, Dan. ix. 2. or perhaps the psalmist was himself in great affliction, which he complains of in the

the beginning of the psalm, but (as in Pfal. lxxvii. and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, however it was now distressed and threatened. But it is clear by the application of ver. 25, 26. to Christ, Heb. i. 11, 12. that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction, or of the afflictions of his church, for his sake. In the psalm we have, (1.) A sorrowful complaint which the psalmist makes either for himself, or in the name of the church, of great afflictions, which were very pressing, ver. 1—11. (2.) Seasonable comfort fetched in against these grievances. (1.) From the eternity of God, ver. 12—23—27. (2.) From a believing prospect of the deliverance which God would in due time work for his afflicted church, ver. 13—22. and the continuance of it in the world, ver. 28. In singing this psalm, if we have not occasion to make the same complaints, yet we may take occasion to sympathise with those that have, and then the comfortable part of this psalm will be more comfortable to us in the singing of it.

¶ A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

1. **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble: incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily. 3. For my days are consumed like smoke: and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread. 5. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top. 8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day: and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. 10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable: It is a prayer of the afflicted; it was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church and for it; and on those that are of a public spirit, afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress, for *whatsoever things were written before time, were written designedly for our use*; The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths, *Hos. xiv. 2. Take with you words.* Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted; let them set not their hands, but their hearts to it, and present it to God. Note, 1. It is many times the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflicted. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to pour out our complaints before the Lord; which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him, and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates also, what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburden itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs.

Such a representation we have here, in which,

1. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, ver. 1, 2. When we pray in our affliction, (1.) It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye, that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears, *Psal. xviii. 6.* and in order to that, let us lift up the prayers, and our souls with it. (2.) It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, *Hear my prayer, O Lord, hear me*; that is, 1. Manifest thyself to me; *hide not thy face from me in displeasure, when I am in trouble*; If thou dost not presently free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me. God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man, even in his prosperity, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou dost hide thy face, and I was troubled*; but if, when we are in trouble God hides his face, the case is sad indeed. 2. Manifest thyself for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of, and in pursuit of: answer me speedily, even in the day when I call. When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be in prayer thus pressing upon him, yet with humility and patience.

2. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions.

(1.) His body was macerated and emaciated; and he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by *making fat the bones*, and the bones flourishing like an herb; so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary; *my bones are burnt as an hearth*, ver. 3. *they cleave to my skin*, ver. 5. *my heart is smitten and withered like grass*, ver. 4. It touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. *I am withered like grass*, ver. 14. scorched with the burning heat of my trouble. If we be thus brought low by bodily distempers; let us not think it strange the body is like grass, weak and of the earth, no wonder it withers then.

(2.) He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit. He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles, that he forgot to eat his bread, ver. 1. He had no appetite to his necessary food, nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul, the delights of sense will be tasteless things, He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above measure, ver. 5. and this wasted him and exhausted his spirits; he affected solitude as melancholy people do; his friends deserted him and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company, ver. 6, 7. *I am like a pelican of the wilderness*; or a bittern (so some that make a doleful noise; *I am like an owl*, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; *I watch and am as a sparrow upon the house-top*. I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles and bemoaning myself. Those who do thus when

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they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction, we should sit alone, to consider our way, *Lam. iii. 28.* but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief.

(3.) He was evil spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil said against him. When his friends went off from him, his foes set themselves against him, ver. 8. *Mine enemies reproach me all the day*, defiling thereby both to create vexation to himself, for an ingenuous mind rejects reproach, and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him, they shot these arrows at him, even bitter words; and in this they were unwearied, they did it all the day, it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous, they are mad against me, and very obstinate and implacable; they are sworn against me, as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, they have sworn against me as accusers, to take away my life.

(4.) He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure, ver. 9, 10. *I have eaten ashes like bread*, i. e. instead of eating my bread, I have laid down in dust and ashes, and I have mingled my drink with weeping; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking, I have only eased myself with weeping. And what is the matter? He tells us, ver. 10. *Because of thy wrath*. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him, as the wrath of God which he was under the apprehensions of, as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery. *Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down*; as that which we cast to the ground, with a design to dash it to pieces, we lift it up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief, and makes it the more grievous. We must eye the hand of God, both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away.

(5.) He looked upon himself as a dying man; *my days are consumed like smoke*, ver. 3. which vanisheth away presently: Or, they are consumed in smoke, of which nothing remains; they are like a shadow that declineth, ver. 11. like the evening shadow, or a forerunner of night approaching. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizeth, making public grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes like the psalmist's body here, withered and parched, nay, like dead and dry bones. The church sometimes is forced into the wilderness, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

12. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion! for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. 14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD: and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven did the LORD behold the earth. 20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death: 21. To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem: 22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here thought of and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints, for *unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness*: so that though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God; but he hath many considerations to revive himself with.

(1.) We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts dying, but God is an ever-living, everlasting God, ver. 12. *My days are like a shadow*; there is no remedy, night is coming upon me; but thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever. Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but our God dies not; what threatened us cannot touch him; our names will be written in the dust, and buried in oblivion; but thy remembrance shall be unto all generations; to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured. A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the eternal mind. God endures for ever; his church's faithful patron and protector; and his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

2. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour, ver. 13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion*; the hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God, thou wilt have mercy upon Zion, for she is become an object of thy pity; and upon the power of God, thou shalt arise and have mercy, shall stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies; *the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this*. And that which is very encouraging is that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which infinite wisdom hath appointed, and therefore it is the best time; and which eternal truth hath fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten or further adjourned. At the end of seventy years the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come and at length did come.

Zion was now in ruins, i. e. the temple that was built in the city of David; the favouring of Zion is the building of it up again, as it is explained, ver. 16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays, *Dan. ix. 17. Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate*. And the building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire; No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church-privileges.

Now this is here wished for and longed for,

(1.) Because it would be a great rejoicing to Zion's friends, ver. 14.

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Thy

Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple, though they were thrown down and scattered, and favour the dust, the very rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, that when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those that truly love the church of God, love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to shew that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

(2.) Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, ver. 5. It would be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, however of their conviction; for so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory; they shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, we will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. Thus is said, Esther viii. 17. that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

(3.) Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God, ver. 16. When the Lord shall build up Zion; they take it for granted it will be done, for God himself hath undertaken it, and he shall then appear in his glory; and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, Father, glorify thy name, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

3. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted, and no notice taken of them; but they will be reviewed and greatly encouraged, ver. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute. It was said, ver. 16. that God will appear in his glory, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, ver. 15. When great men appear in their glory, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply themselves to them, but the great God will not do so. Observe, (1.) The meanness of the petitioners, they are the destitute; it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things; The poor, the weak, the desolate, the stript; thus variously is the word rendered: or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. v. 5. (2.) The favour of God to them notwithstanding their meanness; He will regard their prayers, and will look at it, will peruse their petition, 2 Chr. vi. 40. and he will not despise their prayer. More is implied than is expressed; he will value it, and he will be pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it: But it is thus expressed, because others despise their praying, they themselves fear God will despise it, and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law.

This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer, ver. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them presently. Others experiences should be our encouragements to seek unto God, and trust in him. And if we have the comfort of others experiences, it is fit we should give God the glory of them; the people which shall be created shall praise thee, for what he hath done both for them and for their predecessors; many are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

4. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge, ver. 19, 20. God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, where he hath prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place: thence did the Lord behold the earth, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is or can be hid from his all-seeing eye; he looks down not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, which we would desire to be out of the hearing of; and not only to hear them, but to help them, to loose those that are appointed to death, then when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, God heard their groaning there as he did when they were in Egypt, Exod. iii. 7-9. and came down to deliver them. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoners groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoners: bonds; even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double shackled: We have an instance in Peter, Acts xii. 6.

Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion will help, 1. to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and to make it appear that he answers his name which he himself proclaimed, The Lord God, gracious and merciful; and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, ver. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name, God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, That they may declare his name in Zion, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion, Psal. cxxxvii. 3, 4. and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem, that they might sing them there. For this end God gives liberty from bondage; Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name, Psal. cxxxii. 7. And life from the dead, Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, Psal. cxix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God, ver. 22. when the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem, (as they were after their return out of Babylon) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to serve the Lord. This was fulfilled, Ezra vi. 21. where

we find that not only the children of Israel that were come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves to them from among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy. But it may look farther at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23. He weakened my strength in the way: he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands, 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed. 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe;

1. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon, ver. 23. He weakened my strength in the way. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end; the legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakened, and in all appearance its day shortened; for they said, our hope is lost, we are cut off from our parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. And then what comes of the promise that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time. (1.) To be sickly; bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. (2.) To be short lived; where the former is felt, this is feared; when in the midst of our days according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the number of our months should be cut off in the midst, and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, yet to have it weakened; and of those that could very ill be spared, yet to have their days shortened.

2. A prayer for the continuance of it, ver. 24. O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days. Let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise: Let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come, Destroy it not for that blessing is in it, Isa. lxi. 8. It is a criminal, but she pleads her belly, and for the sake of that hath a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not take us away in the midst of our days; but that if it be his will he would spare us to do him further service, and to be made riper for heaven.

3. A plea to enforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, ver. 25, 26, 27. The apostle quotes these verses, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. and tells us, he saith this to the Son, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, Thy years are throughout all generations, and cannot be shortened. As it is likewise comfortable, in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everlasting God; and therefore if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

(1.) God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity; the Son of God, the eternal Word made the world; It is expressly said, All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore the same was in the beginning from eternity with God, and was God, John i. 1, 2, 3. Col. i. 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 3. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son, ver. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, that is founded on the seas, and on the floods, and yet it abideth; much more shall the church which is built upon a rock. The heavens are the work of thine hands; and by thee are all their motions and influences directed; God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be entrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both and is entitled to both.

(2.) God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity, ver. 26, 27. They shall perish, for thou shalt change them, by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore no doubt thou shalt endure; thou art the same. God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said one would think were enough to decide the controversy presently, and to determine us for God and Christ. For, 1. A portion in the creature is fading and dying; they shall perish, they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it? Heaven and earth shall wax old as a garment, not by a gradual decay; but when the set time comes they shall be laid aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for. As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; not annihilated but altered, it may be, so as that they shall not be at all the same, but new heavens and a new earth. See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth, he can change them as he pleaseth, and when he pleaseth, and the constant changes they are subject to in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when the heavens and time they measure shall be no more. 2. A portion of God is perpetual and everlasting; for thou art the same, subject to no change, and thy years have no end, ver. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise; the same to his church in captivity, that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life, and he is the same; and hath said, because I live, ye shall live also. Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon.

4. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer, ver. 28. *The children of thy servants shall continue*; since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the head we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and dis-tempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to wear out the saints of the most High will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, i. e. a succession of professing people; the church as well as the world is under the influence of that blessing. *Be fruitful and multiply*. These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, i. e. in his service and by his grace; the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but as one generation of good people passeth away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

P S A L M CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, 1. *Stirs up himself, and his own soul to praise God*, ver. 1, 2. for his favour to him in particular, ver. 3—5. to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is and will be just, and constant, ver. 6—18. and for his government of the world, ver. 19. 2. *He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God in praising him*, ver. 20—22. In singing this psalm we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **B**LESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

1. How he stirs up himself to the duty of praise, ver. 1, 2. (1.) It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of, for he is the fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns, it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise; *give him thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*. (2.) It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances, if we do not make heart-work of them; if that which is within us, nay, if all that is within us be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. (3.) In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him: *Forget not all his benefits*. If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust, as well as unkind; since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable. O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but sure thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any.

2. How he furnisheth himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting. Come, my soul, consider what God hath done for thee.

(1.) He hath pardoned thy sins, ver. 3. he hath forgiven and doth forgive all thine iniquities. This is mentioned first, because by the pardon of sin that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; *He hath forgiven all our trespasses*. It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

(2.) He hath cured thy sickness; the corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul; it is its disorder, and threatens its death: this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together; for as for God, his work is perfect, and not done by the halves: if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

(3.) He hath rescued thee from danger. A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness, who redeemed thy life from destruction, ver. 4. from the destroyer, from hell, so the Chaldee; from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who hath obtained eternal redemption for us. See Job xxxiii. 24, 28.

(4.) He hath not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure and long life.

1. He hath given thee true honour and great honour, no less than a crown: *He crowneth thee with his loving kindness and tender mercies*; and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? *This honour have all his saints*. What is the crown of glory but God's favour?

He hath given thee true pleasure; he satisfieth thy mouth with good things, ver. 5. and it is only the favour and grace of God that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer its desires; nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures, Prov. viii. 21. other things will surfeit but not satiate, Eccles. vi. 7. Isa. lv. 2.

3. He hath given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; *thy youth is renewed like the eagle's*. The eagle is long-lived, and as naturalists say, when she is near an hundred years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting time) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his spirit, recovers his people from their decay, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job xxxiii. 25.

6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses; his acts unto the children of Is-

rael. 8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth: so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west: so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth his children: so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust. 15. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him: and his righteousness unto children's children: 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise, here he looks abroad and takes notice of his favour to others also; for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; all the saints being fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessing.

1. Truly God is good to all, ver. 6. He executeth righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed, for even in common providence, he is the patron of wronged innocency, and one way or other will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.

2. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He hath revealed himself and his grace to us, ver. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts to the children of Israel; not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed, for God reduceth us to himself by revealing himself to us; and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He hath made known his acts and his ways, i. e. his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him: so Dr. Hammond. Or, by his ways, we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs (as the word signifies) his promises and purposes what to do with us. Thus fairly doth God deal with us.

2. He hath never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so, ver. 8. The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. in answer to Moses's request, chap. xxxiii. 13. *I beseech thee shew me thy way, that I may know thee*. It is my way, saith God, to pardon sin. 1. He is not soon angry, ver. 8. He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss, not ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing that he may give space to repent, and doth not speedily execute the sentence of his law. And he could not be thus slow to anger, if he were not plenteous in mercy, the very Father of mercies. 2. He is not long angry; for, ver. 9. He will not always chide, though we always offend and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebuke of providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no not for our sins, but after the spirit of bondage will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to take up! what would become of us if God should deal so with us? He will not keep his anger for ever, against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa. liv. 8.—lvii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we for our parts must own, that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, ver. 10. The scripture saith a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal that it is true; that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we had been in hell long ago; but he hath not rewarded us after our iniquities; so they will say, who know what sin deserves. He hath not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which should make us think the worse, and not the better of sin; for God's patience should lead us to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.

3. He hath pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, ver. 3. but our transgressions, ver. 12. though it is of our own benefit by the pardoning mercy of God that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, 1. The transcendent riches of God's mercy, ver. 11. As the heaven is high above the earth, so high, that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse; so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most; so much above and beyond them, that there is no proportion at all between them: the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least token of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus great towards them that fear him, not toward them that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. 2. The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy, ver. 12. As far as the east is from the west, (which two quarters of the world are at the greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes) so far hath he removed our transgressions from us, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them, they shall be fought for and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He hath pitied our sorrows, ver. 13, 14. Observe, 1. Whom he pities; *them that fear him*, i. e. all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity upon account of the grievances which they are not only born, but born again to. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet *travelling at his word*, those he pities, Jer. xxi. 18, 20. 2. How he pities, *as a father pitieth his children*, and doth them good as there is occasion. God is a father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them, pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities

Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple, though they were thrown down and scattered, and favour the dust, the very rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, that when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those that truly love the church of God, love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to shew that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours: as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

(2.) Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, ver. 5. It would be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, however of their conviction: for so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory: they shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it: they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, we will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you. Zech. viii. 23. Thus is said, Esther viii. 17. that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

(3.) Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God, ver. 16. When the Lord shall build up Zion; they take it for granted it will be done, for God himself hath undertaken it, and he shall then appear in his glory; and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, Father, glorify thy name, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

3. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted, and no notice taken of them; but they will be reviewed and greatly encouraged, ver. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute. It was said, ver. 16. that God will appear in his glory, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, ver. 15. When great men appear in their glory, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply themselves to them, but the great God will not do so. Observe, (1.) The meanness of the petitioners, they are the destitute; it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things; The poor, the weak, the desolate, the stript; thus variously is the word rendered: or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. v. 5. (2.) The favour of God to them notwithstanding their meanness; He will regard their prayers, and will look at it, will peruse their petition, 2 Chr. vi. 40. and he will not despise their prayer. More is implied than is expressed; he will value it, and he will be pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it: But it is thus expressed, because others despise their praying, they themselves fear God will despise it, and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law.

This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer, ver. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them presently. Others experiences should be our encouragements to seek unto God, and trust in him. And if we have the comfort of others experiences, it is fit we should give God the glory of them; the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord, for what he hath done both for them and for their predecessors; many that are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be wrought upon to turn profelytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

4. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge, ver. 19, 20. God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, where he hath prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place: thence did the Lord behold the earth, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is or can be hid from his all-seeing eye; he looks down not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, which we would desire to be out of the hearing of; and not only to hear them, but to help them, to loose those that are appointed to death, then when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, God heard their groaning there as he did when they were in Egypt, Exod. iii. 7-9. and came down to deliver them. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoners groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoners bonds; even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double shackled: We have an instance in Peter, Acts xii. 6.

Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion will help, 1. to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and to make it appear that he answers his name which he himself proclaimed, The Lord God, gracious and merciful; and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, ver. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name. God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, that they may declare his name in Zion, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion, Psal. cxxxvii. 3, 4. and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem, that they might sing them there. For this end God gives liberty from bondage; Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name, Psal. cxxxii. 7. And life from the dead, Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, Psal. cxix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God, ver. 22. when the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem, (as they were after their return out of Babylon) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to praise the Lord. This was fulfilled, Ezra vi. 21. where

we find that not only the children of Israel that were come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves to them from among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy. But it may look farther at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23. He weakened my strength in the way: he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed. 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe,

1. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon, ver. 23. He weakened my strength in the way. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end; the legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakened, and in all appearance its day shortened; for they said, our hope is lost, we are cut off from our parts, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. And then what comes of the promise that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time. (1.) To be sickly; bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. (2.) To be short lived; where the former is felt, this is feared; when in the midst of our days according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the number of our months should be cut off in the midst, and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, yet to have it weakened; and of those that could very ill be spared, yet to have their days shortened.

2. A prayer for the continuance of it, ver. 24. O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days. Let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise: Let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come, Destroy it not for that blessing is in it, Isa. lxxv. 8. It is a criminal, but she pleads her belly, and for the sake of that hath a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not take us away in the midst of our days; but that if it be his will he would spare us to do him further service, and to be made riper for heaven.

3. A plea to enforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, ver. 25, 26, 27. The apostle quotes these verses, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. and tells us, he saith this to the Son, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, Thy years are throughout all generations, and cannot be shortened. As it is likewise comfortable, in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everlasting God; and therefore if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

(1.) God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity; the Son of God, the eternal Word made the world; It is expressly said, All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore the same was in the beginning from eternity with God, and was God, John i. 1, 2, 3. Col. i. 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 3. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son, ver. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, that is founded on the seas, and on the floods, and yet it abideth; much more shall the church which is built upon a rock. The heavens are the work of thine hands; and by thee are all their motions and influences directed; God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be entrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both and is entitled to both.

(2.) God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity, ver. 26, 27. They shall perish, for thou shalt change them, by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore no doubt thou shalt endure; thou art the same. God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said one would think were enough to decide the controversy presently, and to determine us for God and Christ. For, 1. A portion in the creature is fading and dying; they shall perish, they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it! Heaven and earth shall wax old as a garment, not by a gradual decay; but when the set time comes they shall be laid aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for. As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; not annihilated but altered, it may be, so as that they shall not be at all the same, but new heavens and a new earth. See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth, he can change them as he pleaseth, and when he pleaseth, and the constant changes they are subject to in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when the heavens and time they measure shall be no more. 2. A portion of God is perpetual and everlasting; for thou art the same, subject to no change, and thy years have no end, ver. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise; the same to his church in captivity, that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life, and he is the same; and hath said, because I live, ye shall live also. Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon.

4. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer, *ver. 28.* The children of thy servants shall continue; since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the head we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and dis-tempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to wear out the saints of the most High will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; these children shall have a seed, i. e. a succession of professing people; the church, as well as the world is under the influence of that blessing. *Be fruitful and multiply.* These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, i. e. in his service and by his grace; the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but as one generation of good people passeth away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

P S A L M CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, 1. *Stirs up himself, and his own soul to praise God, ver. 1, 2. for his favour to him in particular, ver. 3—5. to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is and will be just, and kind, and constant, ver. 6—18. and for his government of the world, ver. 19.* 2. *He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God in praising him, ver. 20—22. In singing this psalm we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.*

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **B**LESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases. 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

1. How he lieth up himself to the duty of praise, *ver. 1, 2.* (1.) It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of, for he is the fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns, it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise; *give him thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* (2.) It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances, if we do not make heart-work of them; if that which is within us, nay, if all that is within us be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. (3.) In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him: *Forget not all his benefits.* If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust, as well as unkind; since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable. O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but sure thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any.

2. How he furnisheth himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting. Come, my soul, consider what God hath done for thee.

(1.) He hath pardoned thy sins, *ver. 3.* he hath forgiven and doth forgive all thine iniquities. This is mentioned first, because by the pardon of sin that is taken away, which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; *He hath forgiven all our trespasses.* It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

(2.) He hath cured thy sickness; the corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it is its disorder, and threatens its death: this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together; for as for God, his work is perfect, and is done by the halves: if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

(3.) He hath rescued thee from danger. A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness, *who redeemed thy life from destruction, ver. 4.* from the destroyer, from hell, so the Chaldee; from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who hath obtained eternal redemption for us. See Job xxxiii. 24, 28.

(4.) He hath not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure and long life.

1. He hath given thee true honour and great honour, no less than a crown: *He crowneth thee with his loving kindness and tender mercies;* and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? *This honour have all his saints.* What is the crown of glory but God's favour?

He hath given thee true pleasure; he satisfieth thy mouth with good things, *ver. 5.* and it is only the favour and grace of God than can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer its desires; nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures, Prov. viii. 21. other things will surfeit but not satiate, Eccles. vi. 7. Isa. lv. 2.

3. He hath given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; *thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* The eagle is long-lived, and as naturalists say, when she is near an hundred years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting time) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his spirit, recovers his people from their decay, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job xxxiii. 25.

6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Is-

rael. 8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth: so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west: so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth his children: so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust. 15. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him: and his righteousness unto children's children: 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise, here he looks abroad and takes notice of his favour to others also; for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; all the saints being fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessing.

1. Truly God is good to all, *ver. 6.* He executeth righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed, for even in common providence, he is the patron of wronged innocency, and one way or other will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.

2. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He hath revealed himself and his grace to us, *ver. 7.* He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts, to the children of Israel; not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed, for God redeemeth us to himself by revealing himself to us; and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He hath made known his acts and his ways, i. e. his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him: so Dr. Hammond. Or, by his ways, we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs (as the word signifies) his promises and purposes what to do with us. Thus fairly doth God deal with us.

2. He hath never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so, *ver. 8.* The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. in answer to Moses's request, chap. xxxiii. 13. *I beseech thee shew me thy way, that I may know thee.* It is my way, saith God, to pardon sin. 1. He is not soon angry, *ver. 8.* He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss, not ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing that he may give space to repent, and doth not speedily execute the sentences of his law. And he could not be thus slow to anger, if he were not plenteous in mercy, the very Father of mercies. 2. He is not long angry; for, *ver. 9.* He will not always chide, though we always offend and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebuke of providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no not for our sins, but after the spirit of bondage will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to take up! what would become of us if God should deal so with us? *He will not keep his anger for ever,* against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa. liv. 8.—lvii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we for our parts must own, that *he hath not dealt with us after our sins, ver. 10.* The scripture saith a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal that it is true; that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we had been in hell long ago; but *he hath not rewarded us after our iniquities;* so they will say, who know what sin deserves. He hath not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which should make us think the worse, and not the better of sin; for *God's patience should lead us to repentance,* Rom. ii. 4.

3. He hath pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, *ver. 3.* but our transgressions, *ver. 12.* though it is of our own benefit by the pardoning mercy of God that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, 1. The transcendent riches of God's mercy, *ver. 11.* As the heaven is high above the earth, so high, that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse; so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most; so much above and beyond them, that there is no proportion at all between them: the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least token of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus great towards them that fear him, not toward them that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. 2. The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy, *ver. 12.* As far as the east is from the west, (which two quarters of the world are at the greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes) so far hath he removed our transgressions from us, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them, they shall be sought for and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He hath pitied our sorrows, *ver. 13, 14.* Observe, 1. Whom he pities; *them that fear him,* i. e. all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity upon account of the grievances which they are not only born, but born again to. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet trembling at his word, those he pities, Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. 2. How he pities, *as a father pitieth his children,* and doth them good as there is occasion. God is a father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them, pities them when they are forward, and bears with them; pities

pities them when they are sick, and comforts them, *Iſa.* lxvi. 13. when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their ſubmiſſion, forgives them: when they are wronged, and right them. Thus the Lord pitieth them that fear him. 3. Why he pities, for he knoweth our frame. He has reaſon to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himſelf made man of the duſt, he remembers that he is duſt, not only by conſtitution, but by ſentence; *Duſt thou art.* He conſiders the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our ſouls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us; how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us, in all which appears the tendereſs of his compaſſion.

5. He hath perpetuated his covenant mercy, and thereby provided relief for our frailty, *ver.* 15, 16, 17, 18. See here, 1. How ſhort man's life is, and of what uncertain continuance; the lives even of great men and good men are ſo, and neither their greatneſs nor their goodneſs can alter the property of them. *As for man his days are as graſs*, which grows out of the earth, riſes but a little way above it, and ſoon withers and returns to it again. See *Iſa.* xl. 6; 7. Man in his beſt eſtate ſeems ſomewhat more than graſs, he flouriſheth and looks gay, yet then he is but like a flower of the field, which though diſtinguiſhed a little from the graſs, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and though in its own nature withering, yet will laſt the longer for its being ſheltered by the garden wall, and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field, (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itſelf, but expoſed to the cold blaſts, and liable to be cropt and trod on by the blaſts of the field. Man's life is not only waſting of itſelf, but its period may be anticipated by a thouſand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection, a blaſting wind, unſeen, unlooked for, paſſeth over it, and it is gone, it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, and the place thereof, which was proud of it, now knows it no more. Such a thing is man: God conſiders it, and pities him, let him conſider it himſelf, and be humble, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another.

2. How long and laſting God's mercy is to his people, *ver.* 17, 18. it will continue longer than their lives, and will ſurvive their preſent ſtate. Obſerve,

1. The deſcription of thoſe to whom this mercy belongs: they are ſuch as fear God, i. e. are truly religious from a principle. 1. They live a life of faith: for they keep God's covenant; having taken hold of it they keep hold of it, ſaſt hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treaſure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. 2. They live a life of obedience, they remember his commandments to do them, elſe they do not keep his covenant. Thoſe only ſhall have the benefit of God's promiſes that make conſcience of his precepts. See who they are that have a good memory (as well as a good underſtanding), *Pſal.* cxi. 10. thoſe that remember God's commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them.

2. The continuance of the mercy which belongs to ſuch as theſe; it will laſt them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be ſhort, ſince death itſelf will be no abridgement, no infringement of their bliſs. God's mercy is better than life, for it will outlive it.

(1.) To their ſouls, which are immortal, to them the mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting, from everlaſting in the counſels of it, to everlaſting in the conſequence of it: in their election before the world was, and their glorification when this world ſhall be no more; for they are predeſtinated to the inheritance, *Eph.* i. 11. and look for the mercy of the Lord, the Lord Jeſus unto eternal life.

(2.) To their ſeed, which ſhall be kept up to the end of time, *Pſal.* cii. 28. His righteouſneſs, the truth of his promiſe unto children's children, provided they tread in the ſteps of their predeceſſors piety, and keep his covenant, as they did, then ſhall mercy be preſerved to them, even to a thouſand generations.

19. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20. Bleſs the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in ſtrength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21. Bleſs ye the LORD, all ye his hoſts, ye miniſters of his that do his pleaſure. 22. Bleſs the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bleſs the LORD, O my ſoul.

Here is, 1. The doctrine of univerſal providence laid down, *ver.* 19. He hath ſecured the happineſs of his peculiar people by promiſe and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general he ſecures by common providence. The Lord hath a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government; he that made all, rules all, and both by a word of power; he hath prepared his throne, hath fixed and eſtabliſhed it that it cannot be ſhaken; he has fore-ordained all the meaſures of his government, and doth all according to the counſel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens above us, and out of ſight; for he holdeth back the face of his throne, and ſpreadeth a cloud upon it, *Job* xxvi. 9. yet can himſelf judge through the dark cloud, *Job* xxii. 13. Hence, the heavens are ſaid to rule, *Dan.* vi. 26. and we are led to conſider this by the influence which even the viſible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, *Job* xxxviii. 33. *Gen.* i. 6. But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, yet his kingdom ruleth over all. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs of this lower world, and diſpoſeth all perſons and things according to the counſel of his will to his own glory, *Dan.* iv. 35. His kingdom ruleth over all kings, and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

2. The duty of univerſal praiſe inferred from it: if all are under God's dominion, all muſt do him homage.

(1.) Let the holy angels praiſe him, *ver.* 20, 21. *Bleſs the Lord, ye his angels*; and again, *Bleſs the Lord, all ye his hoſts, ye miniſters of his.* David had been ſtirring up himſelf and others to praiſe God, and here in the cloſe he calls upon the angels to do it: not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praiſe God. They do it continually: but thus he expreſſes his high thoughts of God, as worthy of the adoration of the holy angels; thus he quickens himſelf and others to the duty with this conſideration, that it is the work of angels; and comforts himſelf in reference to his own weakneſs and defect in the performance of his duty, that there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's houſe and are ſtill praiſing him. In ſhort, the bleſſed angels are glorious attendants upon the bleſſed God. Obſerve, 1. How well qualified they are for the poſt they are in. They are able, for they excel in ſtrength; they are mighty in ſtrength, ſo the word is: they are able to bring great things to paſs, and to abide in their work without wearineſs. And they are as willing as they are able, they are willing to know their work; for they hearken to the voice of his word; they ſtand expect-

commiſſion and inſtruction from the great Lord, and always behold his face, *Matt.* xviii. 10. that they may take the ſiſt intimation of his mind. They are willing to do their work, they do his commandments, *ver.* 20. they do his pleaſure, *ver.* 21. they diſpute not any divine commands, but readily addreſs themſelves to the execution of them; nor do they delay, but fly ſwiftly, *They do his commandments at hearing*; or, as ſoon as they hear the voice of his word, ſo Dr. Hammond. To obey is better than ſacrifice; for angels obey, but do not ſacrifice. 2. What their ſervice is; they are his angels, and miniſters of his: his, for he made them, and made them for himſelf; his, for he uſeth them though he doth not need them: his, for he is their Owner and Lord, they belong to him, and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his ſervants, but not as the angels that attend the preſence of his glory. Soldiers and ſeamen and all good ſubjects ſerve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the miniſters of ſtate, and thoſe of the houſehold. (2.) The angels occaſionally ſerve God in this lower world; they do his commandments, go on his errands, *Dan.* ix. 21. fight his battles, *2 Kings* vi. 17. and miniſter for the good of his people, *Heb.* i. 14. (2.) They continually praiſe him in the upper world; they begin betimes to do it, *Job* xxxviii. 7. and it is ſtill their buſineſs, from which they reſt not day or night, *Rev.* iv. 8. It is God's glory that he hath ſuch attendants, but more his glory that he neither needs them nor is benefited by them.

(2.) Let all his works praiſe him, *ver.* 22. all, in all places of his dominion, for becauſe they are his works, they are under his dominion; and they were made and are ruled, that they may be unto him for a name and a praiſe. All his works, i. e. all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praiſe God: yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works too, let them praiſe him objectively, though they cannot actually do it, *Pſal.* cxlv. 10. yet all this ſhall not excuſe David from doing it, but rather excite him to do it the more chearfully, that he may bear a part in this concert; for he concludes, *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul*, as he began, *ver.* 1. Bleſſing God and giving him glory, muſt be the alpha, and the omega of all our ſervices. He begun with *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul*, and when he had penned and ſung this excellent hymn to his honour, he doth not ſay, Now, O my ſoul, thou haſt bleſſed the Lord, ſet down and reſt thee, but *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul*, yet more and more. When we have done never ſo much in the ſervice of God, yet ſtill we muſt ſtir up ourſelves to do more; God's praiſe is a ſubject that will never be exhausted, and therefore we muſt never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

P S A L M CIV.

It is very probable that this psalm was penned by the ſame hand, and at the ſame time with the former; for as that ended, this begins, with, *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul*, and concludes with it too, *ver.* 35. The ſtile indeed is ſomewhat different, becauſe the matter is ſo; the ſcope of the foregoing psalm was to celebrate the goodneſs of God, and his tender mercy and compaſſion, to which a ſoft and ſweet ſtile was moſt agreeable; the ſcope of this is to celebrate his greatneſs and majeſty, and ſovereign dominion, which ought to be done in the moſt ſtately and lofty ſtrains of poetry. David, in the former psalm, gave God the glory of his covenant-mercy and love to his own people; in this he gives him the glory of his works of creation and providence, his dominion over and his bounty to all the creatures. God is there praiſed as the God of grace, here as the God of nature. And this psalm is wholly beſtowed on that ſubject; not as *Pſalm* xix. which begins with it, but paſſeth from it to the conſideration of the divine law; nor as *Pſalm* viii. which ſpeaks of this but prophetically, and with an eye to Chriſt. This noble poem is thought by very competent judges, not only for piety and devotion, (that is paſt diſpute) but for ſight of fancy, brightneſs of ideas, ſurpriſing turns, and all the beauties and ornaments of expreſſion far to excel any of the Greek or Latin poets upon any ſubject of this nature. Many great things the psalmiſt here gives God the glory of. 1. The ſplendor of his majeſty in the upper world, *ver.* 1-4. 2. The creation of the ſea, and the dry land, *ver.* 5-9. 3. The proviſion he makes for the maintenance of all the creatures according to their nature, *ver.* 10-18. and again, *ver.* 27, 28. 4. The regular courſe of the ſun and moon, *ver.* 19-24. 5. The furniture of the ſea, *ver.* 25, 26. 6. God's ſovereign power over all the creatures, *ver.* 22-39. And laſtly, he concludes with a pleaſant and firm reſolution to continue praiſing God, *ver.* 33-35. With which we ſhould heartily join in ſinging this psalm.

1. BLESS the LORD, O my ſoul: O LORD, my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majeſty. 2. Who covereſt thyſelf with light, as with a garment: who ſtretcheth out the heavens like a curtain. 3. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind. 4. Who maketh his angels ſpirits; his miniſters a flaming fire. 5. Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it ſhould not be removed for ever. 6. Thou covereſt it with the deep as with a garment: the waters ſtood above the mountains. 7. At thy rebuke, they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they haſted away. 8. They go up by the mountains: they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou haſt founded for them. 9. Thou haſt ſet a bound that they may not paſs over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

When we are addreſſing ourſelves to any religious ſervice, we muſt ſtir up ourſelves to take hold on God in it, *Iſa.* lxiv. 7. ſo David doth here. Come my ſoul, where art thou? what art thou thinking of? here is work to be done, good work, angel's work; ſet about it in good earneſt, let all thy powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it: *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul*, *Jer.* xxx. 20.

In theſe verſes, 1. The psalmiſt looks up to the divine glory ſhining in the upper world, which though it is one of the things not ſeen, yet faith is the evidence of it. With what reverence and holy awe doth he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment! O Lord my God, thou art very great; and it is the joy of the ſaints that he that is their God is a great God; the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleaſure of all his good ſubjects. The majeſty

of God is here set forth by divers instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make; their equipage compared with his (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp) is but as the light of a glow-worm compared with that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great,

(1.) In their robes; And what are God's robes? *Thou art clothed with honour and majesty*, ver. 1. God is seen in his works, and those speak him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. *Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment*, ver. 2. God is light, 1 John i. 5. the *Father of light*, 1 Jem. i. 17. he *dwells in light*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created the first day, Gen. i. 3. Of all visible beings light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, i. e. to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

(2.) In their palaces or pavilions when they take the field: And what is God's palace, and his pavilion? He *stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain*, ver. 2. so he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded or *stretched out*, Gen. i. 7. He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments: so he doth still, he now *stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain*, i. e. keeps them upon the stretch, and they *continue to this day according to his ordinance*. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world to break its dazzling light; for though God *covers himself with light*, yet, in compassion to us, he *makes darkness his pavilion*; thick clouds are a *covering to him*. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great he is that *fills heaven and earth*. He hath his chambers, his upper rooms, so the word signifies, *the beams whereof he lays in the waters*, the waters that are above the firmament, ver. 3. as he has *founded the earth upon the fers and floods*, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm, in the place assigned them, as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he, whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

(3.) In their coaches of state, and their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries; but God *makes the clouds his chariots*, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud as in a chariot, to mount Sinai, to give the law, and to mount Tabor, to proclaim the gospel, Matt. xvii. 5. and he *walks* (a softly pace indeed, yet stately) *upon the wings of the wind*. See Pfalm xviii. 10, 11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleases, and serves his own purposes by them.

(4.) In their retinue or train of attendants: And here also God is very great; for, ver. 4. he *maketh his angels spirits*. This is quoted by the apostle, Heb. i. 7. to prove the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be *his angels*, and *his ministers*, for they are under his dominion, and at his disposal: they are winds, and a *flame of fire*, i. e. they appeared in wind and fire, so some; or they are swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he maketh them spirits, so the apostle quotes it. They are spiritual beings; and whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the farther removed from the incumbrances of the human nature, and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine nature. And they are bright and quick, and ascending as fire, as a *flame of fire*. In Ezekiel's vision they ran and returned *like a flash of lightning*, Ezek. i. 14. Thence they are called *Seraphim*, burners. Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them.

2. He looks down, and looks about to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court, as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

(1.) He hath founded the earth, ver. 5. though he has *hung it upon nothing*, Job. xxvi. 2. (*ponderibus librata suis*) yet it is as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He hath built the earth upon her basis, so that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet *it shall not be removed for ever*, i. e. not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting. "God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that, being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling into heaven."

(2.) He hath set bounds to the sea; for that is also his.

1. He brought it within bounds in the creation. At first the earth (which being the more ponderous body, would subside of course) was *covered with the deep*, ver. 6. *the waters were above the mountains*; and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, an habitation for man; and therefore, on the third day, God said, *Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear*, Gen. i. 9. This command of God is here called his rebuke, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water, and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with his word, and therefore it is also called the *voice of his thunder*, which is a mighty voice, and produceth strange effects, ver. 7. *At thy rebuke*, as if they were made sensible that they were out of their place *they fled, they hasted away*; they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them; as it is said, on another occasion, Pfalm lxxvii. 16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, they were afraid*. Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror. But *was the Lord displeased against the rivers*? No, it was for the *salvation of his people*, Hab. iii. 8—13. So here, God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to prepare room for him; for men must not be made *as the fishes of the sea*, Hab. i. 14. they must have air to breathe in. Immediately, therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, ver. 8. *They go over hill and dale* (as we say) *go up by the mountains and down by the valleys*: they will neither stop at the former nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way to the place which thou hast founded for them, and there they make their bed. Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God? for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to, and resting in the place assigned them, teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appointeth us the bounds of our habitation.

2. He keeps it within bounds, ver. 9. The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them, they may not, and therefore, they do not, *turn again to cover the earth*. Once they did, in Noah's flood, because God bid them, but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not

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to drown the world again. God himself glories in this instance of his power, Job xxxviii. 8, &c. and useth it as an argument with us to fear him, Jer. v. 22. This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, that the waters of the sea, would soon cover the earth, if God did not restrain them.

10. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. 11. They give drink to every beast of the field, the wild asses quench their thirst. 12. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. 13. He watered the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14. He causeth the grafs to grow for the cattle; and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth: 15. And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. 16. The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted. 17. Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. 18. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies.

Having given glory to God, as the powerful protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

1. He provides fresh water for their drink: *He sendeth the springs into the valleys*, ver. 10. There is water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we never so thirsty, it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink. Naturalists dispute about the origin of mountains; but whatever are their second causes, here is their first cause; it is God that *sends the springs into the brooks, which walk by easy steps between the hills*, and receive increase from the rain-water that descends from them. *These give drink*, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to every beast of the field, ver. 11. for where God has given life, he provides a livelihood, and takes care of all the creatures; even the wild asses, though untameable, and therefore of no use to man, yet are welcome to quench their thirst, and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though *born like the wild ass's colt*. We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair water with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable. That ought to be reckoned a great mercy, the want of which would be a great affliction; and the more common it is, the greater mercy it is; *Ufus communis aquarum*.

2. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast; *the heavens drop fatness; they hear the earth, but God hears them*, Hos. ii. 21. *He waters the hills from his chambers*, ver. 13. from those chambers spoken of, ver. 3. *the beams of which he lays in the waters*, those store-chambers, the clouds that distil the fruitful showers. The hills that are not watered by the rivers as Egypt was by Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called *the river of God*, Pfalm lxxv. 9. as Canaan was, Deut. vi. 11, 12. Thus *the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works*; either with the rain it drinks in; the earth knows when it has enough; it is a pity that any man should not; or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation. The food which God brings forth out of the earth, ver. 14. is *the fruit of his works*, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe how various and how valuable its products are; for the cattle there is grafs, and the beasts of prey that live not on grafs feed on those that do. For man there is herbs, a better sort of grafs, (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised) nay, he is furnished with wine and oil and bread, ver. 15.

We may observe here concerning our food, that which will help to make us both humble and thankful. 1. To make us humble. Let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God, for all the supports of this life, we live upon alms, we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us; that our food comes all out of the earth, to mind us whence we ourselves were taken, and whither we must return; and that therefore we must not think to live by bread alone; for that will feed the body only; but must look into the word of God for the meat that endures to eternal life. It is also humbling to consider, that we are upon the same fellow-commoners with the beasts; the same earth, the same spot of ground that brings grafs for the cattle, brings corn for man. 2. To make us thankful, let us consider, (1.) That God not only provides for us, but for our servants; the cattle that are of use to man, are particularly taken care of; grafs is made to grow in great abundance for them, when the young lions, that are not for the service of man, often lack and suffer hunger. (2.) That our food is nigh us, and ready to us, having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on the merchants ships that bring food from afar, Prov. xxxi. 14. (3.) That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight; so good a Master do we serve. 1. Doth nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which strengtheneth man's heart, and is therefore called the staff of life; let none that have that complain of want. 2. Doth nature go further, and cover something pleasant? Here is wine that makes glad the heart, refresheth the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully; it is pity that should be abused to over-charge the heart, and disfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. 3. Is nature yet more humourfome, and doth it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth; oil to make the face to shine, that the countenance may not only be cheerful, but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

Nay, the divine providence not only furnisheth animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs, ver. 16. *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*; not only mens trees which they take care of, and have an eye to, in their orchards and parks, and other inclosures; but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence, yet they are full of sap, and want no nourishment; even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth: they are trees which he hath planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord

planted in his vineyard: these are full of sap: for what God plants, he will water: and they that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. Pfalm xciii. 13.

3. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves, and for the cattle that are serviceable to them: but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for.

(1.) The birds—Some birds by instinct make their nests in the bushes near rivers, *ver. 12. By the springs that run among the hills, some of the fowls of heaven have their habitation which sing among the branches.* They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and Benefactor, and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly father feedeth them, Matt. vi. 26. and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow. The birds being made to fly above the earth, as we find, *Gen. i. 20. they make their nests on high in the tops of trees, ver. 17.* and it should seem, as if nature had an eye to this in planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heaven-ward shall not want resting places: The stork is particularly instance in; *the fir-trees, which are very high, are her house, her castle.*

(2.) The lesser sort of beasts; *ver. 18. The wild goats, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find a shelter in the rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at defiance.* Doth God provide thus for the inferior creatures, and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people?

19. He appointeth the moon for seasons, the sun knoweth his going down. 20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23. Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening. 24. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27. These wait all upon thee: that thou mayest give them their meat in due season: 28. That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God.

1. For the constant revolution and succession of day and night, and the dominion of the sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions to shew, that the gods they worshipped are the creatures and servants of the true God, *ver. 19. He appointeth the moon for seasons, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides.* The full and change, the increase and decrease of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the creator; so doth the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down, as if he were an intellectual being, and knew what he did.

God herein consults the comfort of man.

(1.) The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night, *ver. 20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night,* which though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night all the beasts of the forest creep forth to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth, *Gen. ix. 2.* which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour. See how nearly allied they are to the disposition of the wild beasts, that wait for the twilight, *Job xxiv. 15.* and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul; when in either of those ways it is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth, Satan's temptations then assault us, and have advantage against us. Then the young lions roar after their prey; and as the naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts so, that they have not strength or spirit to outrun them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to seek their meat from God, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man but more immediately by the providence of God. The roaring of the lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted, *asking their meat of God.* Doth God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures; and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken groans which cannot be uttered.

(2.) The light of the morning befriends the business of the day, *ver. 22, 23. The sun ariseth* (for as he knows his going down, so, thanks be to God, he knows his rising again) and then the wild beasts betake themselves to their rest, even they have some society among them, for they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as he cometh himself travellers, between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no where to excuse himself from the busyness of the day, with this, that there is a lion in the way. Therefore, then man goes forth to his work and to his labour; the beasts of prey creep forth with fear, man goes forth with boldness, as one that hath dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief, man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, when man must apply to every morning, for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by, and which we must stick to till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

2. For the replenishing of the ocean, *ver. 25, 26. As the earth is full of riches, well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food; so is this*

great and wide sea, which seems an useless part of the globe, at least not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place, and made it serviceable, to man both for navigation, there go the ships, in which goods are conveyed to countries vastly distant, speedily, and much cheaper than by land carrying; and also to be his store-house for fish; God made not the sea in vain, no more than the earth; he made it to be inhabited, for there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals, which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation, *Gen. i. 21.* and is here called the leviathan, as *Job xli. 1.* He is made to play in the sea; he hath nothing to do as man hath that goes forth to his work; he hath nothing to fear, as the beasts have that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters. It is pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein; spending all their time in pastime. The leviathan is said to play in the waters, because he is so well armed against all assaults that he sets them at defiance, and laughs at the shaking of a spear, *Job xli. 29.*

3. For the reasonable and plentiful provision, which is made for all the creatures, *ver. 27, 28. (1.) God is a beautiful benefactor to them; he gives them their meat; he opens his hand, and they are filled with good.* He sustains the armies both of heaven and earth; even the meanest creature are not below his cognizance. He is open handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good housekeeper that provides for so large a sin.

(2.) They are patient expectants from him. They all wait upon him; they seek their food according to the natural instinct God has put in them, and in their proper seasons for it; and affect not any other food, at any other time, than nature has ordained; they do their part for the obtaining of it; what God gives them, they gather, and expect not that providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with, they are filled with good; and desire no more than what God sees fit for man, which may shame our murmurings and discontent, and unsatisfiedness with our lot.

4. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which the species of each are still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, (1.) All the creatures perishing, *ver. 29. Thou hidest thy face, withdrewest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled presently.* Every creature hath as necessary a dependence upon God's favours, as every saint is sensible he has; and therefore saith with David, *Pfalm xxx. 7. Thou hidest thy face and I was troubled.* God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man, is the cause of all that vanity and burthen which the whole creation groans under. Thou takest away their breath, which is in thy hand; and then, and not till then, they die and return to the dust, to their first principles. The spirit of the beast that goes downward is at God's command, as well as the spirit of a man which goes upwards. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. (2.) All preserved not withstanding in a succession, *ver. 30. thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;* the same spirit, i.e. the same divine will and power, by which they were all created at first, still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that though one generation of them passed away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus the face of the earth is renewed from day to day, by the light of the sun, which beautifies it anew every morning; from year to year by the products of it which enrich it anew every spring, and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This, the Jews say, is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God, *ver. 24. O Lord how manifold are thy works!* They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet in wisdom, hast thou made them all. When men undertake many works and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected, and not done with due care: but God's works, though many and of very different kinds, yet all are made in wisdom and with the greatest exactness, there is not the least flaw or defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are to be looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the work of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal monarch.

31. The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praises unto my God, while I have my being. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more: blest thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

1. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

(1.) He is to be praised. 1. As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, *ver. 31.* It shall endure to the end of time in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity, in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the creator there is no variableness. 2. As a gracious God; the Lord shall rejoice in his works: He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness, which he had, when he saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good, and reflect the seventh day. We often do that which upon the review we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at and with undone again, blaming our own management. But God always rejoiceth in his works, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence but God never doth; he rejoiceth in the works of his grace, his gifts and callings are not without repentance. 3. As a God of almighty power, *ver. 32. He looked on the earth, and it trembleth,* as unable to bear his frowns; trembleth, as Sinai did at the presence of the Lord. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. The volcanoes or burning mountains, such as *Atna*, are emblems of the power of God's wrath tattering upon proud unhumiliated sinners. If any angry look and touch hath such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his outstretched arm! Who knows the power of his anger? Who

Who then dares set it at defiance? God therefore rejoiceth in his works, because they are all so obedient of him; and he will in like manner take pleasure in them that fear him and that tremble at his word.

(2.) The psalmist will himself be much in praising him, ver. 33. *I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God, will praise him* i. e. Jehovah, the Creator, and as my God, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but as long as I live, and while I have my being. Because we have our life and being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live, and have our being, we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being on earth, we hope to have a better life and better being in a better world; and there to be doing this work in a better manner and in better company.

2. Joy to himself, ver. 35. *My meditation of him shall be sweet*: it shall be fixed and close, it shall be affecting and influencing, and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing, when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified. *I will be glad in the Lord*, i. e. it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and in him only. All my joys shall center in him, and in him they shall be full.

3. Terror to the wicked, ver. 35. *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more*. 1. They that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed, none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. 2. They that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him, whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. They that make that earth to groan under the burden of their impieties, which God thus fills with his riches, deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out. 3. They that heartily desire to praise God themselves, cannot but have an holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and an holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction, and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. And even this ought to be the matter of their praise; while sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord, that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by a special grace of God. When the wicked are no more, I hope to be praising God world without end: and therefore, *Praise ye the Lord*; let all about me join with me in praising God. *Hallelujah*: sing praise to Jehovah. This is the first time that we meet with *hallelujah*; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it is upon the like occasion, when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1-3, 4-6.

P S A L M CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us, that, in our devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work, than how the time passeth; and neither over-stretch ourselves by carrying to be long, nor over-shrink ourselves by carrying to be short; but either the one or the other, as we find in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm; the general scope is the same with most of the psalms, to set forth the glory of God, but the subject matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace, we may if we please furnish ourselves out of the word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts, so copious, so various, so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm we are taught to praise God for his wondrous work of common providence with reference to the world in general. In this we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the eleven first verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph to be used (as it should seem) in the daily service of the sanctuary, when the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it: by which it appears, both who penned it, and when, and upon what occasion it was penned; 1 Chron. xvi. 7, &c. David by it designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface, ver. 1-7, and the history itself in several articles. 1. God's covenant with the patriarchs, ver. 8-11. 2. His care of them while they were strangers, ver. 12. 15. 3. His raising up Joseph to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, ver. 16-22. 4. The increase of Israel in Egypt, and their deliverance out of Egypt, ver. 23-38. 5. The care he took of them in the wilderness and their settlement in Canaan, ver. 39-45. In singing this we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; must look upon ourselves concerned in the affairs of the Old Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for ensamples.

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD: call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. 2. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 4. Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face evermore. 5. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. 6. O ye seed of Abraham his servants, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7. He is the LORD our God, his judgments are in all the earth.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God.

Observe, 1. The duties we are here called to; and they are many; but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name (1.) We must give thanks unto him, as one who has always been our bountiful benefactor, and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours; poor returns for rich receivings. (2.) Call upon his name, as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies, is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies: *Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him*. (3.) Make known his deeds, ver. 1. that others may join with you in praising him. Talk ye of all his wondrous works, ver. 2. as we talk of things, that we are full of, and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them as we sit in the house, and as we go by the way, Deut. vi. 7. Not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion, and the encouraging of our own and others faith and hope in God.

Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. (1.) Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others, and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. (5.) *Glory in his holy name*, let those that are disposed to glory, not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God, and their relation to him, Jer. ix. 23, 24. *Praise ye his holy name*, (so some;) but it comes all to one; for in glorying in him, we give glory to him. (6.) *Seek him*; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he hath appointed. *Seek the Lord and his strength*, i. e. the ark of his strength, seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. *Seek his strength*, i. e. his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be inquired of. *Seek the Lord and his strength, ened*; (so divers ancient versions read it.) They that would be strengthened in the inward man, must fetch it strength from God by faith and prayer. *Seek his strength*, and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. *Seek his face evermore*, i. e. Seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it. (7.) *Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him*, ver. 3. for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. And if those have reason to rejoice that seek the Lord, much more those that have found him.

2. Some judgments to quicken us to these duties.

1. Consider both what he hath said, and what he hath done to engage us for ever to him; you will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders which should make deep and durable impressions upon you; the wonders of his providence which he hath wrought for you, and those that are gone before you; the marvellous works that he hath done, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful and with the grateful; the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and intrusted you with; the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand, ver. 5.

2. Consider the relation you stand in to him, ver. 6. *Ye are the seed of Abraham his servants*: you are born in his house, and being thereby intitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. You are the children of Jacob his chosen, and are chosen and beloved for the father's sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you inherit. You are the children of holy parents, do not degenerate; you are God's church upon earth, and if you do not praise him, who should?

3. Consider your interest in him; *He is the Lord our God*, ver. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God, Isa. viii. 19. and praise their God, Dan. v. 4. He is Jehovah our God, he that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, hath an irreducible power and uncontrollable sovereignty, His judgments are in all the earth, he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. 9. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac: 10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11. Saying, unto thee will I give the land of Canaan the lot of your inheritance. 12. When they were but a few men in number: yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people. 14. He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes: 15. Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 16. Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant. 18. Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron. 19. Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. 20. The king sent and looked him: even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: 22. To bind his princes at his pleasure: and teach his senators wisdom. 23. Israel also came into Egypt: and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24. And he increased his people greatly: and made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught in praising God to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming; which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of, and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless, we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the psalmist here doth from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church, and our histories quite outshine theirs.

Two things are here made the subject of praise:

1. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise, that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers. In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel, he remembered his covenant, ver. 8. he will remember it for ever; it is the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. See here the power of the promise, it is the word which he commanded, and which will take all &c; see the perpetuity of the promise, it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty, 1 Chron. xvi. 15. *Be ye mindful always of his covenant*. God will not forget it, and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant because

because there was something required on man's part, as the condition of the promise. Observe, (1.) The persons with whom this covenant was made, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, *Heb. xi. 8, 9.* (2.) The ratifications of the covenant: it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac, and to Abraham. See to whom God *swore by himself*, *Heb. vi. 13, 14.* Is that sure which is passed *into a law*? He confirmed the same for a law, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? That confirmed for an everlasting covenant, inviolable. (3.) The covenant itself; *Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan*, *ver. 11.* The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence, but promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it them himself as it were with his own hand; it shall be given them as their lot which God assigns them, and measures out to them as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase; by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, *Eph. i. 11.* And this is the promise which God has promised us, (as Canaan was the promise he promised them) even eternal life, *1 John ii. 25.* Tit. i. 2.

2. His providences concerning the patriarchs while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise; which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things happened unto them for examples, and encouragements to all the heirs of the promises that live by faith as they did.

1. They were wonderfully protected and sheltered, and (as the Jewish masters express it) gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty. This is accounted for here, *ver. 12, 13, 14, 15.* Where we may observe,

(1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men: To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable that if he had not prepared for them a city in the other world, he would have been ashamed to have been called their God, see *Heb. xi. 16.* because he was always generous; and yet even in this world he was not wanting to them, but that he might appear to do uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials. 1. They were few, very few; Abraham was called alone, *Isa. liii. 2.* he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to run his country; Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, *Gen. xxxiv. 30.*) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few; and yet upheld. 2. They were strangers, and therefore were the more likely to be abused and to meet with strange usages, and the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers, *1 Pet. iv. 4.* and to be hooted at as speckled birds, *Jer. xii. 9.* Though the whole land was theirs by promise yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant, that they confessed themselves strangers in it, *Heb. xi. 13.* 3. They were unsettled, *ver. 13.* They went from one nation to another, from one part of that land to another (for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations) *Gen. xii. 8.—xiii. 3—18.* Nay, from one kingdom to another people; from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them, yet they were forced to it by famine. Note, Though frequent sitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best men.

(2.) How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which was the more magnified, by their being so many ways exposed, *ver. 14, 15.* They were not able to help themselves, and yet, 1. No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to *Gen. xxxv. 5.* where we find that the terror of God (an unaccountable restraint was upon the cities that were round about them, so that (though provoked) they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. 2. Even crowned heads that did offer to wrong them were not only checked and chidden for it but controlled and baffled; he reproved kings for their fakes in dreams and visions, saying, touch not mine anointed, it is at your peril if you do; nay it shall not be in your power to do it, do my prophets no harm. Pharaoh king of Egypt was plagued, *Gen. xii. 17.* and Abimelech king of Gerar was sharply rebuked, *Gen. xx. 6.* for doing wrong to Abraham. Note, 1. Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes if they do wrong. 2. God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that oil of gladness, *1 John ii. 27.* 3. They that offer to touch God's prophets with design to harm them, may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is zealous for his prophets, who so toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. 4. Even they that touch the prophets, nay, that kill the prophets, (as many did) yet cannot do them any harm, any real harm. 5. God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied: And here also (1.) They were reduced to great extremity, even in Canaan, the land of promise, he called for a famine, *ver. 16.* Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction when God sends them forth with commission. To try the faith of the patriarchs, God brake the whole staff of bread, even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was. (2.) God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependance upon his promise that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil thing to befall them, or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and intrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, and to save that holy seed alive, *Gen. xlix. 21—20.* In order to this,

1. He was humbled, greatly humbled, *ver. 17, 18.* God sent a man before them, even Joseph, many years before the famine began, he was sent before them that was to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecass of providence, and so long it reaches: but in what character did he go to Egypt, who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in the quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but he was sold thither for a servant, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough and one would think set him far enough from any probability of being great; and yet he was brought lower, he was made a prisoner, *ver. 18.* His feet they hurt with fetters, being unjustly charged with crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress; the iron entered into his soul, i. e. was very painful to him; and the false accusation, which was the cause of his imprisonment, did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart: yet all this was the way to his preferment.

2. He was exalted, highly exalted; he continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, until the time appointed of God for his release, *ver. 19.* when his word came, i. e. his interpretations of dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears by the chief butler; and then the word of the Lord cleared him, i. e. the power of God gave him to foretell things to come, rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with; for it could not be thought God would give such a power to so ill a man as he was represented to be. God's word tried him, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time set when God's word will come for the comfort of all that trust in it, *Hab. ii. 3.* At the end it shall speak, and not lie. God gave the word, and then the king sent and loosed him; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh finding him to be a favourite of heaven, 1. Discharged him from his imprisonment, *ver. 20.* he let him go free. God has a way, by wonderful turns of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocency. 2. He advanced him to the highest posts of honour, *ver. 21, 22.* He made him lord high chamberlain of his household, (he made him lord of his house;) nay, he put him into the office of lord treasurer, the ruler of all his substance. He made him prime minister of state, lord president of his council, to command his princes at his pleasure, and teach them wisdom: general of his forces: according to thy word shall all my people be ruled, *Gen. xli. 40—43, 41.* He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators, and punish those that were disobedient. In all this Joseph was designed to be, (1.) A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great that he might be good especially in the household of faith. (2.) A figure of Christ that was to come: who, because he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and had all judgment committed to him.

Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, *Israel also came into Egypt*, *ver. 23.* where he and all his were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years; Thus the New Testament church has a place provided for her, even in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, *Rev. xii. 14.* verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, *ver. 24.* In Egypt he increased his people greatly, they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies, and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it, *Exod. i. 9.* The children of Israel are more and mightier than we; when God pleaseth, a little one shall become a thousand: and God's promises, though they work slowly, yet they work surely.

25. He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26. He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. 27. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28. He sent darkness, and made it dark: and they rebelled not against his word. 29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. 32. He gave them hail for rain: and flaming fire in their land. 33. He smote their vines also and their fig-trees: and brake the trees of their coasts. 34. He spake, and the locusts came: and caterpillars and that without number. 35. And did eat up all the herbs in their land: and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36. He smote also all the first-born in their land: the chief of all their strength. 37. He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. 38. Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. 39. He spread a cloud for a covering: and fire to give light in the night. 40. The people asked, and he brought quails: and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, they ran in the dry places like a river. 42. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant: 43. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: 44. And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people: 45. That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

After the history of the patriarchs follow here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

1. Their affliction in Egypt, *ver. 25.* He turned the heart of the Egyptians that had protected them, to hate them, and deal subtilly with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them, and though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of *Gen. xlii. 32—xlii. 34*) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them because they despised them, now because they feared them. They dealt subtilly with them, set all their politics on work, to find out ways and means to weaken them and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burdens heavy, and their lives bitter, and slew their male-children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtilty, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy: Though God is not the author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

2. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the Ten Commandments. Observe,

(1.) The instruments employed in that deliverance, *ver. 26.* He sent Moses his servant on this errand and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be the lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest: and therefore, that they might respect them the more, and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

(2.) The

(2.) The means of accomplishing that deliverance; and those were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders in summoning them, just as God appointed them, and *they rebelled not against his word*, ver. 28. as Jonah did, who when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians; but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's *signs and his wonders*, ver. 27. they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. *They showed the words of his signs*, so it is in the original, for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and spoke aloud. They are all or most of them here influenced in, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.

1. The plague of *darkness*, ver. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first: God *sent darkness*, and coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command *made it dark*. And then they, *i.e.* the people of Israel, *rebelled not against God's word*, viz. a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised; in doing which the three days' darkness would be a protection to them. The old translation follows the Septuagint, and reads it, *they were not obedient to his word*; which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who notwithstanding the terror of this plague, *would not let the people go*; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.

2. The turning of the river Nile (which they idolized) *into blood*, and all the other waters, which *flew their fish*, ver. 29. and so they were deprived not only of their drink, but the daintiest of their meat, *Numb. xi. 5*.

3. The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the *chamber of their kings* and great men, whose hearts had been full of vanity, more poisonous, and more noxious, contempt of and enmity to both God and his Israel.

4. Flies of divers sorts swarming in the air, and lice in their clothes, ver. 31. *Exod. viii. 17, 24*. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest and most despicable animals, for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors; to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence.

5. Hail-storms smothered their trees, even the strongest timber-trees in *their crops*, and killed their vines, and other their fruit trees, ver. 32, 33. Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and thunder and lightning to that degree, that the *fire ran along upon the ground*, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, *Exod. ix. 23*.

6. *Locusts and caterpillars* destroyed all the herbs which were made for the service of man, and eat the bread out of their mouths, ver. 34, 35. See what variety of judgments God has wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one: for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies, and how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, *Joel. i. 4, 6*.

7. Having mentioned all the plagues, but those of murrain and biles, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of the *first-born*, ver. 36. In the dead of the night the joys and hopes of their families, the chief of their strength, and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God seized theirs by way of reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for *when God judgeth he will overcome*, and they will certainly sit down losers at last that contend with him.

(3.) The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, 1. They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy; God not only brought them forth, but he *brought them forth with silver and gold*, ver. 37. God empowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours, which was indeed but part of payment for their service they had done them, and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his, and therefore he might, their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he could give it to the Israelites. 2. Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage, and yet when God brought them forth, *there was not one feeble person, none sick, none so much as sickly, among their tribes*: They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, but among so many thousand there was not one sick! so false was the representation which the Jews enemies in after ages gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. 3. They had been trampled upon, and insulted over, and yet they were brought out with honour, ver. 38. *Egypt was glad when they departed*; for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that *the fear of Israel fell upon them*, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome. God can and will make his church a *burdensome stone* to all that *heave at it*, and seek to displace it, so that they shall think themselves happy that get out of its way, *Sech. xii. 3*. *when God judgeth he will overcome*. 4. They had spent their days in sorrow and sighing, by reason of their bondage, but now he brought them forth *with joy and gladness*, ver. 43. when Egypt's cry for grief was loud; their first-born being all slain, Israel's shouts for joy were as loud; both when they looked back upon the land of slavery, out of which they were rescued, and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening, God put a new song into their mouth.

(4.) The special care God took of them in the wilderness. 1. For their shelter, besides the canopy of heaven he provided them another heavenly canopy, he *spread a cloud for a covering*, ver. 39. Which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion, *Psalms, xviii. 11*. and now it was Israel's; for they also were his hidden ones. 2. For their conduct and refreshment in the dark, he appointed a pillar of fire to *go light in the night*, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnishes them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come there where it will be all day to eternity. 3. He fed them both with necessities and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl, ver. 40. *The people asked, and he brought quails*; and when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied *with the bread of heaven*; and those are curious and covetous indeed, who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat angels food and that constantly, and on free cost. And as every bit they eat had miracle in it, so had every drop they

drank: *he opened the rock, and the waters gushed out*, ver. 41. Common providence fetcheth waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the divine power brings bread from the clouds, and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out at once, but it *ran like a river*; plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the *rock follow them*, 1 Cor. x. 4. and, which increased the miracle, this river of God (so it might be truly called) *ran in dry places*, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would expect it should have been by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, *I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen*, Isa. xliii. 19, 20.

5. Their entrance at length into Canaan, ver. 44. *He gave them the lands of the heathen*; put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for, God's Israel had the enjoyment of; *they inherited the labour of the people*, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

6. The reasons why God did all this for them.

1. Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, ver. 42. They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did those great things in their favour, *because he remembered the word of his holiness*, (*i.e.* his covenant) *with Abraham his servant*, and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground. See *Deut. vii. 8*.

2. Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but that *they might observe his statutes and keep his laws*; that being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution: that having good land given them, they might out of the profits of it, bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law; concluding that also obliged for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God: and the happiness which the psalm concludes, may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours, and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet doth he expect so little from us? *Praise ye the Lord*.

PSALM CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness, but our own badness, which he is as faithful to each other: our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, ver. 47. I rather think it was penned by David at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the two last in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it. 1 Chron. xvi. 34, 35, 36. Gather us from among the heathen: for we may suppose in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites when David was forced to wander. In this psalm we have, 1. The preface to the narrative speaking honour to God, ver. 1, 2. comfort to the saints, ver. 3. and the desire of the faithful towards God's favour, ver. 4, 5. 2. The narrative itself of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocations at the Red sea, ver. 6—12. Lustful, ver. 13—15. Mutinying, ver. 16—18. Worshipping the golden calf, ver. 19—23. Murmuring, ver. 24—37. Joining themselves to Balaam, ver. 23—31. Quarrelling with Moses, ver. 32, 33. Incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, ver. 34—39. To which is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, ver. 40—46. 3. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise, ver. 47, 48. It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God, and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD, O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*, for his mercy *endureth for ever*. 2. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can shew forth all his praise? 3. Blessed are they who keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times. 4. Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto thy people*: O visit me with thy salvation: 5. That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation: that I may glory with thine inheritance.

We are here taught,

1. To bless God, ver. 1, 2. *Praise ye the Lord*, that is, (1.) Give him thanks for his goodness the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. *He is good*, and his mercy *endureth for ever*; let us therefore own our obligations to him, and make him a return of our best affections and services. (2.) Give him the glory of his greatness; his *mighty acts*, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed: *Who can utter these? Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it?* They are so many they cannot be numbered, so mysterious they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told, till there is more to be said: it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must *shew forth his praise*, we may shew forth some of it, but *who can shew forth all?* not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

2. To bless the people of God, to call and count them happy, ver. 3. *They that keep judgment are blessed*, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are they whose principles are sound, *they keep judgment*, they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices

are agreeable: they *do righteousness*, are just to God, and to all men; and herein they are steady and constant; they do it *at all times*, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, at every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

3. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it accordingly with all seriousness, as the psalmist here, *ver. 4*. 5. 1. He has an eye to the loving-kindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness. *Remember me, O Lord*, to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, *with the favour which thou bearest thy people*. As there is a people in the world, that are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people; which all gracious souls desire an interest in: and we need desire no more to make us happy. 2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness; *O visit me with thy salvation*; "Afford me (saith Dr. Hammond) that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee." Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. 3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good. *ver. 5*. *That I may see the good of thy chosen*, and be as happy as thy saints are; and happier I do not desire to be. God's people are here called his chosen, his nation, his inheritance; for he hath set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them, and glorified in them. This chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness, and of their glorying: which is their pleasure and their praise. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and they that have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pride or pleasure. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, is enough to satisfy any man, for it has everlasting joy and glory at the end of it.

6. We have sinned with our fathers: we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. 8. Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake: that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths as through the wilderness. 10. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them: and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. 12. Then believed they his words, they sang his praise.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now the church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that therefore he hath done right, because *we have done wickedly*: and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope, that though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God, *ver. 6*. *We have sinned with our fathers*, i. e. like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our father's iniquity, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord, *Numb. xxii. 11*. *Matt. xxii. 32*. And see how they load upon themselves as becomes penitents; *We have committed iniquity*, that which is in its own nature sinful; and *we have done wickedly*; we have sinned with an high hand presumptuously. Or, this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in their fathers' sins. *We have sinned with our fathers*, for we were in their loins, and we bear their iniquity, *Iam. v. 7*.

2. They bewail the sins of their fathers, when they were first formed into a people; which since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even farther than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take an occasion from the history of Israel's rebellions, to lament the perverseness and perverseness of man's nature, and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

(1.) The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them, *ver. 7*. *They understood not thy wonders in Egypt*. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have understood*. They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry; by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefits of providence for want of understanding them. And as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous, though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least *they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies* in them. Therefore God is distressed, because his favours are not remembered.

(2.) Their perverseness arising from this stupidity; *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea*. The provocation of this despair of deliverance, because the danger was great, and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, *Exod. xiv. 11, 12*. Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever, the place aggravated the crime; it was *at the sea, at the Red sea*, when they were newly come out of Egypt, and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but that he brought them out of Egypt on purpose to *kill them in the wilderness*. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately, as in their passage through the Red sea, yet there they affronted it and provoked his wrath.

(3.) The great salvation God wrought for them, notwithstanding their provocation, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11*. 1. He forced a passage for them through the sea; *He rebuked the Red sea* for standing in their way and retarding their march, *and it was dried up immediately*, as in the creation, *at God's rebuke the waters fled*, *Pfalm civ. 7*. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he *led them into the sea*, and by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as *through the wilderness*; he encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See *Isa. lxiii. 12, 13, 14*. 2. He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented

them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses with which they were likely to overtake them presently, but God *saved them from the hand of him that hated them*, viz. Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account; *from the hand of his enemy*, which was just ready to seize them, *God redeemed them*, *ver. 10*. interposing himself as it were in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. 3. To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red sea, that was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians, *ver. 11*. *The waters covered their enemies*, so as to flay them, but not so as to conceal their shame; for the next tide they were thrown up dead upon the shore. *Exod. xiv. 30*. *There was not one of them left alive to bring tidings what was become of the rest*. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us, *ver. 8*. it was *for his name's sake*: though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it, and their undeservings should not alter his design, nor break his measures, or make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory *that he might make his mighty power to be known*, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays, *Numb. xii. 17-19*. *Let the power of my Lord be great, and pardon the iniquity of this people*. The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin and sparing sinners, is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

(4.) The good impression this made upon them for the present, *ver. 12*. *Then believed they his words*, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had in mercy to them brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then *they feared the Lord* and his servant Moses, *Exod. xiv. 31*. Then *they sang his praise*, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, *Exod. xv. 1*. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silenceth the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, *They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine*, *Isa. xxix. 24*.

13. They soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel: 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. 16. They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD. 17. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18. And a fire was kindled in their company: the flame burnt up the wicked. 19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox, that eateth grass. 21. They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt: 22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. 23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath lest he should destroy them. 24. Yea they despised the pleasant land: they believed not his word: 25. But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. 26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28. They joined themselves also unto Bal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. 30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore. 32. They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their fakes: 33. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations; and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians, *1 Cor. x. 5*, &c. for these things were *written for our admonition*, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

1. The course of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, *ver. 13*. (1.) They minded not what he had done for them. *They soon forgot his works*, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. They that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them; God took notice of this, *Exod. xxxii. 8*. *They have turned aside quickly. They made haste, they forgot his works*, so it is in the margin, which some make to be two several instances of their sin. *They made haste*, i. e. their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan presently; and because they were not, they questioned whether they should ever be there, and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way; whereas *he that believeth doth not make haste*, *Isa. xxviii. 16*. And withal, *they forgot his works*, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as they had never seen the promises proved. This is mentioned again, *ver. 21, 22*. *They forgot God their Saviour*, i. e. they forgot that he had been their saviour, those that forget the works of God, forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them *in Egypt, in the land of Ham*, and *by the Red sea*, things which we at this distance cannot or should not be unmindful of. They are called *great things* (for though the great God doth nothing mean, yet he doth some things that are in a special manner great) *wondrous works*, out of the common road of providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and *terrible things*, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten; even miracles

miracles that were seen, passed away with them as tales that are told. (2.) They minded not what God had said to them, nor would they depend upon it, *they waited not for his counsel*, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves, about which they did not consult him, and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan presently, and had not patience to tarry God's time; the delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained, *ver. 21. They believed not his word*, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and *ver. 25. They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord*, who gave them counsel which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, *Numb. xiv. 6, 7, &c.* Those that will not wait for God's counsel, shall justly be given up to their own hearts lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

2. The sins of themselves are many of them here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it them, *ver. 14. They lusted a lust*, (so the word is) *in the wilderness*, there where they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding; so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were now in all probability within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they come thither; they had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh, as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word; they did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called *lusting after evil things*. 1 Cor. x. 6. though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, *Pfalm cv. 40.* Yet this was not all, *they tempted God in the desert*, where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See *Pfalm lxxviii. 19, 20.*

Now how did God shew his displeasure against them for this? We are told how, *ver. 15. He gave them their request*, but gave it them in anger, and with a curse; for he sent leanness into their souls, i. e. he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague, with which the Lord smote them, *while the flesh was yet between their teeth*, as we read, *Numb. xi. 33.* It was the consumption of the life. Note, 1. What is asked in passion is often given in wrath. 2. Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, yet at the same time have leanness in their souls; no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. These wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies, and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then *the soul delights itself in fatness*, Isa. lv. 2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them both in church and state, *ver. 16. They envied Moses*, his authority, *in the camp*, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, and chief justice in all the courts; and they envied Aaron his power, as *saint of the Lord*, consecrated to the office of high priest; and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, (Jacob's eldest sons) would claim to be the chief magistrates, by the so much admired right of primogeniture. Note, They are preparing ruin for themselves, who envy those whom God has put honour upon, and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon them who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord.

And how did God shew his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble, *ver. 17, 18. we have the story, Numb. xvi. 32—35.* 1. They that flew in the face of the civil authority, were punished by the earth, which opened and swallowed them up, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government. 2. They that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority in things pertaining to God, on them heaven took vengeance; for *fire came out from the Lord and consumed them*; and the pretending sacrifices were themselves sacrificed to divine justice; *The flame burnt up the wicked*; for though they vied with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness, *Numb. xvi. 3—5.* yet God adjudged them wicked; and as such cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, there where the law was given, and God had expressly said, *Thou shalt neither make any graven image, nor bow down to it*; they did both; *They made a calf, and worshipped it, ver. 19.* Herein they bid defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the little world. 1. That of human reason; for *they changed their glory*, their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud or a bright one) without any manner of visible similitude, *into the similitude of Apis*, one of the Egyptian idols, *an ox that eateth grass*, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, *ver. 20.* Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have done. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained by St. Paul, *Rom. i. 23.* to be the *changing the glory of the incorruptible God*. 2. That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spake to them, but the works he wrought for them, *wondrous works*, which spake aloud that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God, and is alone to be worshipped, *ver. 21, 22.*

For this God shewed his displeasure by declaring the decree, that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he spake of *destroying them*, *ver. 23.* and certainly he had done it, if *Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach*, *ver. 23. i. e.* if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate, about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to, and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's chosen, his elect, in whom his soul delighteth; who stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God, *ver. 24. They despised the pleasant land*; Canaan was a pleasant land, *Deut. viii. 7.* They undervalued it when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the conduct of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They believed not God's word concerning it; but murmured in their tents; basely charging God with a design upon them, in

bringing them thither that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, *Numb. xiv. 2, 3.* And when they were minded of God's power and promise, were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord, that they attempted to stone those that spake to them, *Numb. xiv. 10.* The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land; a promise is left us of entering into it, but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God, that he lifted up his hand against them, in a way of threatening, *to destroy them in the wilderness*; nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, *Psal. xc. 10. Numb. xiv. 28.* Nay, and he threatened that their children also should be overthrown and scattered, (*ver. 26, 27.*) and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan, *ver. 28. They joined themselves to Baal-peor*, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporal and spiritual whoredom, *Numb. xxv. 1, 2, 3.* They that did often partake of the altar of the living God, now eat the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab, that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified; or sacrifices to the infernal deities, on the behalf of their dead friends. Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions, *ver. 29.* in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands and threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great, that long after it is said, *they were not cleansed from it*, *Josh. xxii. 17.*

God testified his displeasure at this, 1. By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away twenty-four thousand of these impudent sinners. 2. By stirring up Phineas to use his power as a magistrate, for the suppressing of the sin, and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners: he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God, that upon it the plague was staid, *ver. 30.* By this and some other like acts of public justice on that occasion (*Numb. xxv. 4, 5.*) the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall; when the proper officers did their duty, God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But Phineas herein signaling himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was counted to him for right counsel to all generations, *ver. 31.* and in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. He shall make an atonement by the offering up the sacrifices, that had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, *ver. 30.*) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they angered God at the waters of strife, *ver. 32.* which refers to that story, *Numb. xx. 3, 4, 5.* And that which aggravated it now was, that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; for though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking, that they put him into a passion, and being now grown very old, and off his guard, he spake unadvisedly with his lips, *ver. 33.* and not as became him upon that occasion; for he said in a heat, *hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?* This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation to keep our mouth as with a bridle, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.* and to take heed to our spirits that they admit not repentments too much; for when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to speak unadvisedly. But it is charged upon the people as their sin, *They provoked his spirit* with that which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation, which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those, who if not greatly provoked would be meek and quiet.

God shews his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan, for their miscarriage upon this occasion; by which 1. God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what doth their sin deserve who had spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* 2. God deprived them of the blessings of Moses's conduct and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to him. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits.

33. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them; 35. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. 37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. 38. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, inasmuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen: and they that hated them ruled over them. 42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43. Many times did he deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsels, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. 45. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. 48. Blessed

be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen, Praise ye the LORD.

Here, 1. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's carriage in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

(1.) They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan, made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those that fetched them out of Egypt; for by that time they were well warm in Canaan, they corrupted themselves and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostacy;

1. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction, ver. 34. when they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

2. When they spared them they promised themselves, that for all this they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglected to destroy the heathen, the next news we hear is, they were mingled among the heathen, made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they learned their works, ver. 35. that which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

3. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too, ver. 36. They served their idols, in the same manner and with the same rites that they served them; and they became a snare to them: that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them which they themselves could not be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

4. When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had the least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last, ver. 37, 38. in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter. They sacrificed their sons and daughters, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; they shed innocent blood, the most innocent, for it was infant blood, not it was the blood of their sons and their daughters. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villainy which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a reprobate mind, Rom. i. 28.

Their sin was in part their own punishment; for by it, 1. They wronged their country. The land was polluted with blood, ver. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land was rendered uncomfortable to themselves and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it, which were designed to be its honour. 2. They wronged their consciences, ver. 23. They went a-whoring with their own inventions, and so debauched their own minds, and were defiled with their own works, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

(2.) God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected? for his name is jealous, and he is a jealous God.

1. He fell out with them for it, ver. 40. He was angry with them, the wrath of God, that consuming fire, was kindled against his people; for from them he took it more heinously than from the heathen that never knew him; nay, he was sick of them, he abhorred his own inheritance, which when time was he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it made us loathsome to God, and the nearer any are to God in profession, the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a daughter at our door.

2. Their enemies then fell upon them, and their defence being departed, made an easy prey of them, ver. 41, 42. He gave them into the hands of the heathen. Observe here how the punishment answered the sin; they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works; from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan that is a tempter will be a tormenter. The heathen hated them; apostates lose all the love on God's side, and yet none on Satan's; and when they that hated them ruled over them, and they were brought in subjection under them, no marvel they oppressed them, and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between his service and the service of the kings of the countries, 2 Chron. xii. 8.

3. When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, ver. 43. This refers to the days of the judges; when God many times raised up deliverers, and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry, provoked God with their counsel, their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they were brought very low for their iniquity. Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, it is just with God to debase them and humble them, and bring them low by his judgments.

4. At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, ver. 44, 45, 46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, cast down, but not cast off; God appeared for them, (1.) As a God of mercy, that looked upon their grievances, regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them, so some, that looked over their complaints, for he heard their cry with tender compassion, Exod. iii. 7. and overlooked their provocations; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them; yet he repented according to the multitude of his mercies and reversed the sentence; though he is not a man that he should repent, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God that pities us, and changeth his way. (2.) As a God of truth that remembered for them his covenant, and made good every word that he had spoken; and therefore, as bad as they were, would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise. (3.) As the God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives, and hated them and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies wrath that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs, and when a man's ways please the Lord, will make even his enemies to pity him, and be at peace with him, When God pities men shall: *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia.*

The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance: even then when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people, still there was occasion to pray, *Lord turn again our captivity*, Psalm cxxvi. 1--4. To here, ver. 47. *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen.* We may suppose that many who were forced into foreign countries in the times of the Judges (as Naomi was, *Ruth* i. 1.) were not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, *Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name*; not only that they may have cause to give thanks and hearts to give thanks, but that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished; and so may triumph in thy praise, over those that had in scorn challenged them to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it, ver. 48. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.* He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then let all the people say, *Amen, Hallelujah*, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises and confessions. According to this rubric or directory, we find that when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung, all the people said, *Amen*, and praised the Lord by saying, *Hallelujah*. By these two comprehensive words it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises, which as their mouth they offer up to God according to his will, saying *Amen* to the prayers, and *Hallelujah* to the praises.

P S A L M. CVII.

The psalmist having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power and goodness of God in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there were those that pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those that worshipped images, yet had some knowledge of a supreme Numen, to whom when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care. 1. He instances in some of the most common calamities of human life; and shews how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers. (1.) Banishment and dispersal, ver. 2--9. (2.) Captivity and imprisonment, ver. 10--16. (3.) Sickness and distemper of body, ver. 17--22. (4.) Danger and distress at sea, ver. 23--32. And these are put for all the like perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present help. 2. He instances in the varieties and vicissitudes of events concerning nations, and families; in all which God's hand is to be eyed by his own people with joyful acknowledgment of his goodness, ver. 33--43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses, it will be comfortable to sing this psalm with application; but if we be not, others are and have been, of whose deliverance it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

1. **G**IVE thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let the redemption of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy: 3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. 4. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in. 5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7. And he led them forth in the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8. O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with gladness.

Here is, 1. A general call to all to give thanks to God, ver. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray it over, let themselves herein to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter of praise may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness; in the fountain he is good, in the streams, his mercy endureth for ever, and never faileth. 2. A particular demand here of from the redemption of the Lord; which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great redeemer, and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people most reason to say that God is good and his mercy everlasting; these are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, *John* xi. 52. *Matt.* xxiv. 31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance wrought for them when in their distress, they cried unto the Lord, ver. 6. Is any afflicted? let him pray. Doth any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles are in extremity, that is a man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before then cried aloud; and then it is God's time to succour; in the mount he will be seen.

1. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue; he redeemed them from the hand of the enemy, ver. 2. not by might or power it may be, *Zeck.* iv. 6. nor by price or reward, *Isa.* lxxv. 13. but by the Spirit of God working on the spirits of men.

2. They were dispersed as outcasts; but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, ver. 3. See *Deut.* xxx. 4. *Ezek.* xxxiv. 12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

3. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling-place to rest in, ver. 4. When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. They wandered in the wilderness, where there was no trodden path, no company, but in a solitary way; no lodging, no conveniences, no accommodations, no inhabited city

city where they might have quarters of refreshment. But God led them forth by the right way, ver. 7. directed them to an inn, nay, directed them to a home, that they might go to a city of habitation, which was inhabited; nay, which they themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly whose way lies through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss, and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out, and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places, both to bait in, and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years; it is said, *Deut. xxxii. 10. God led them about, and yet here he led them by the right way*: God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear at last to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here no continuing city; but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims; but we are under the conduct of his wise and good providence, which if we commit ourselves to, we shall be led in the right way to the city that hath foundations.

4. They were ready to perish for hunger, ver. 5. *Their soul even fainted in them*, spent with the fatigues of their journey, and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. They that have constant plenty, and are every day fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness, ver. 9. Israel's wants were reasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish: The same God that has led us has fed us all our life long unto this day; has fed us with food convenient; has provided food for the soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness, after God the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory.

Now for all this, they who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks, ver. 8. *O that men*, (it is meant especially of those men whom God has graciously relieved) *would praise the Lord for his goodness to them in particular, and for his wonderful works to others of the children of men*! Note, 1. God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace considering the unworthiness of those he shows mercy to. 2. Those who receive mercy from God, it is expected they return praise to him. 3. We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God; to others as well as to ourselves.

10. Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron: 11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: 12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labour, they fell down, and there was none to help. 13. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 14. He brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15. O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe,

1. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to sit in darkness, ver. 10. in dark dungeons, close prisoners: it intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate, they sit in the shadow of death; which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are bound in affliction, and many times in iron, as Joseph. Thus for a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

2. The cause of this affliction, ver. 11. It is because they rebelled against the words of God: Willful sin is rebellion against the words of God: it is a contradiction to his truths, and a violation of his laws. They contemned the counsel of the most High, and thought they neither needed it, nor could be the better for it; and they that will not be counselled cannot be helped. They that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences, nor the just reproofs of their friends, condemn the counsel of the most High, and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for and to reclaim them from their rebellions.

3. The design of this affliction, and that is to bring down their heart, ver. 12. to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's designs, and walk contrary to him in them, if our hearts be unhumiliated and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour? the honour sunk? Are those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray, ver. 13. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who when they are at liberty could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, who formerly thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble; but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it.

5. Their deliverance out of the affliction. They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them, ver. 13. He brought them out of darkness into light, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant; brought them out of the shadow of death to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, ver. 14. Were they fettered? He brake their bands asunder. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? He broke the gates of brass, and the bars of iron, wherewith those gates were made fast, he did not put back, but cut in sunder. Note, When God will work deliverance, the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people, (he was with Joseph in the prison) so they cannot keep them in, when the time, the set-time for their enlargement is come.

6. The return that is required from those whose hands God has loosed, ver. 15. Let them praise the Lord for his goodness, and take occasion from

their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, the world and they that dwell therein.

17. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. 18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, he saveth them out of their distresses. 20. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. 21. O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life, which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

1. That we by our sins bring sickness upon ourselves, and then it is our duty to pray, ver. 17, 18, 19.

(1.) It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently. Fools, because of their transgressions, are thus afflicted; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed, and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, makes it necessary. Sinners are fools, they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest; not only their spiritual but their secular interest. They prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out their foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

(2.) The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, ver. 18. when people are sick, their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; they not only have no desire to it, nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it; and here they may read their sin in their punishment; they that doted most on the meat that perissheth, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed: what they took too much of, now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the stomach's gone, the life is as good as gone, they draw near unto the gates of death, they are in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, and ready to be turned to destruction.

(3.) Then is a proper time for prayer. Then they cry unto the Lord, ver. 19. Is any sick? let him pray, let him be prayed for; prayer is a salve for every sore.

2. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness; and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this Job xxxiii. 19—23.

(1.) When those that are sick call upon God, he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him, and he saveth them out of their distresses, ver. 19. he removes their griefs and prevents their fears. 1. He doth it easily: He sent his word and healed them, ver. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking: He said, be clean, be whole, and the work was done. And to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word and heals souls; convinceth, converteth, sanctifieth them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness God in his providence doth but speak it, and it is done. 2. He doth it effectually, he delivereth them out of their destructions, that they shall neither be destroyed nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do, who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and raises up; who turneth man almost to destruction, and yet saith, Return.

(2.) When those that have been sick are recovered, they must return to God an answer of praise, ver. 21, 22. Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness, and let them particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service: let them sacrifice with thanksgiving; not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. And let them declare his works with rejoicing to his honour, and for the encouragement of others. The living, the living, they shall praise him.

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: 24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. 27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. 28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 32. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon them to give glory to God who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

1. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, ver. 23, 24. They that go down to the sea in ships, as mariners, merchants, fishermen or passengers that do business in great waters, (and sure none will expose themselves there, but those that have business; among all Solomon's pleasant things, we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had; but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection

protection.) *These are the works of the Lord, and his wonders:* which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land; and what passeth at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder; its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea, is wonderful. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God, whose the sea is, for he made it, and manageth it.

2. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here,

(1.) How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God commandeth and raiseth the strong wind, which fulfilleth his word, Psalm cxviii. 8. He raiseth the winds, as a prince by his commission raiseth forces. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air; but he is a pretender: the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy, it *lifteth up the waves of the sea*, ver. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves: they seem to *mount up to the heavens*, and then couch again, as if they would go down to the depths, ver. 26. A stranger that had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave should bury it, and it should never come up again: and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, doth by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed, the *soul of the seaman melts because of trouble*; and when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears; but they reel to and fro, the tossing makes them giddy, and they stagger and are sick, it may be, like a drunken man, the whole ship's crew is in confusion, and quite at their wits end, ver. 27. not knowing what to do more for their own preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone. *Jonah i. 5, &c.*

(2.) How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them, is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for then they will cry unto the Lord, ver. 28. We use to say, They that will learn to pray, let them go to sea; I say, They that will go to sea, let them learn to pray, and use to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners in a storm, cried every man to his God; but they that have the Lord for their God, have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits end, they are not at their faith's end.

(3.) How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers; he bringeth them out of the danger; and, 1. The sea is still: he maketh the storm a calm, ver. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling: By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man, that even the winds and the seas obeyed him. 2. The seamen are made easy; they are glad because they be quiet; quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. 3. The voyage becomes prosperous and successful: so he bringeth them to their desired haven, ver. 30. Thus he carries his people safe through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-wards; and lands them at length in their desired harbour.

(4.) How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially that have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness to the glory of God? Let them do it privately in their closets and families, ver. 31. Let them praise the Lord for his goodness to themselves and others; let them do it publicly, ver. 32. in the congregation of the people, and in the assembly of the elders: there let them elect the memorials of their deliverance to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground: 34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. 36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38. He blesteth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39. Again they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. 42. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43. Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.

The psalmist having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

1. He gives some instances of these revolutions,

(1.) Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful: Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, 1. The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it unserviceable, ver. 33, 34. Land watered with rivers is sometimes turned into a wilderness, and that which had been full of water-springs, now has not so much as water-streams, it is turned into dry and sandy ground, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a fruitful land is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punisheth the wickedness of them that dwell therein; as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to them that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine. 2. The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a wilderness, a land of drought, into water-springs, ver. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be at this day a

fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, *Deut. xix. 23*. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe that formerly were famous, expound this. (2.) Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, 1. We see many greatly increasing whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean and made no figure, ver. 36, 37, 38. Those that were hungry are made to dwell in fruitful lands, there they take root, gain a settlement, and prepare a city for habitation for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must prepare a city of habitation; so lodgings, though never so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must sow the fields, and plant vineyards, ver. 37. for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though water-springs, will not yield fruits of increase, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it doth encourage diligence; and ordinarily the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, maketh rich, ver. 38. He blesteth them also, so that they are in a little time, multiplied greatly, and he diminisheth not their cattle. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures increase and multiply, Gen. i. 22. and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground: Cattle would decrease many ways if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. 2. We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing, ver. 39. Again they are diminished and brought low, by cross providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing: and many times those that are filled with it, before they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it, that ere they are aware they lose it again. Hence it is called deceitful riches, and the mammon of unrighteousness. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by oppression, affliction and sorrow, as he tempted Job, and brought him low.

(3.) Those that are high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, ver. 40, 41. We have seen, 1. Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. He poureth contempt upon them, even among those that have idolized them. They that exalt themselves, God will abase; and in order thereunto will insinuate; he maketh them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and turns them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, or what measures to take. We met with this before, *Job xii. 24, 25*. Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour, ver. 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust, to the throne of glory, 1 Sam. ii. 8. Psalm cxlii. 7, 8. Those that were afflicted and trampled on, are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. And that which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is the multitude of their children; he maketh him families like a flock of sheep, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat, sent them mouths: Happy is the man that hath his quiver filled with arrows, for he shall boldly speak with the enemy in the gate, Psalm cxxxvii. 5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up and building up of families. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised; for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

2. He makes some improvement of these remarks: such surprising turns as these are of use:

(1.) For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure, ver. 42. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice, in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manageth the children of men, as the potter doth the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see despised virtue advanced, and impious pride brought low to the dust; to see it evinced beyond dispute, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(2.) For the silencing of sinners; All iniquity shall stop her mouth, i. e. it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the divine providence; and so far as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

(3.) For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness, ver. 43. Whoso is wise and will observe these things, these various dispensations of divine providence, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Here is, 1. A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to understand the loving kindness of the Lord. It is of great use to us in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness; to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it; that his loving kindness may be before our eyes, Psalm xxvi. 3. 2. A proper means prescribed for attaining this end; and that is a duly observing of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Luke ii. 19. 3. A commendation of the use of this means as an instance of true wisdom: Whoso is wise let him by this both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observation of the providences of God, will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

P S A L M. CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise and concludes with prayer, and faith is at work in both. 1. David here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, ver. 1-5. 2. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, and putting them in suit, ver. 6-13. The former part is taken out of Psalm lvii. 7, &c. the latter out of Psalm lx. 5; &c. and both with very little variation; to teach us that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes convenient, to gather some verses out of one psalm and some out of another, and to put them together to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm we must give glory to God, and take comfort to ourselves.

A SONG OR PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **O** God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give thanks, even with my glory. 2 Awake psalter and harp: I myself will awake early. 3. I will praise thee O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth:

We may here learn to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art.

1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart; our heart must be employed in the duty, else we make nothing of it, and engaged to the duty; *ver. 1. O God, my heart is fixed, and I will sing and give praise.* Wandering struggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told here is work enough for them all.

2. We must praise God with freeness of expression; I will praise him with my glory, i. e. with my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter, our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, *Psalm xlv. 1.* David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God, and therefore it follows, *Awake, my psalter and harp.* Whatever gift we excel in we must praise God with.

3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner, and not carelessly, *ver. 2. Awake, psalter and harp;* let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. *I myself will awake early* to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him, and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness, *ver. 3. I will praise thee among the people of the Jews;* nay, *I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth.* Whatever company we are in, we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us; for it looks like being ashamed of our master.

5. We must in our praises magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner, *ver. 4. mercy in promising, truth in performing.* The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see farther than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth, there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen in the other world.

6. Since we find ourselves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all to his own glory, to get himself honour, and make himself a name, *ver. 6. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens,* higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises; and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. *Father, glorify thine own name; thou hast glorified it, glorify it again.* It is to be our first petition, *Hallowed be thy name.*

6. That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me. 7. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8. Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head, Judah is my lawgiver. 9. Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: over Philistia will I triumph. 10. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 11. Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? 12. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 13. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

1. We must be public-spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts at the throne of grace the concerns of the church of God, *ver. 6. It is God's beloved,* and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon we are answered if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for ourselves. *Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have. Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended,* *Psalm lxxii. 19, 20.* he desires no more.

2. We must in prayer act faith upon the power and promise of God; upon his power, *Save with thy right hand,* which is mighty to save; and upon his promise, *God hath spoken in his holiness,* in his holy word, to which he hath sworn by his holiness, and therefore *I will rejoice,* *ver. 7.* What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God hath said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

3. We must in prayer take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in the possession of it. God had promised David to give him, (1.) The hearts of his subjects, and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already. *Shechem and Succoth, Gilead, and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah,* they are all my own, *ver. 8.* with such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David; he will without fail give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; for so hath he spoken in his holiness; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him, he will lose none; he also as David shall have the hearts of his subjects, *John vi. 37.* And, (2.) The necks of his enemies; these are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab and Edom and Philistia as his own already, *ver. 4. Over Philistia will I triumph,* which explains *Psalm lx. 8. Philistia, triumph thou because of me;* which some think should be read, *O my soul triumph thou over Philistia.* Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall in due time be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him, *Heb. ii. 8.*

4. We must take encouragement from the beginning of mercy, to pray and hope for the perfecting of it, *ver. 10, 11. Who will bring me into the strong cities,* that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued? This question probably was to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, what methods they should take to subdue the Edomites, and to reduce that country; but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hand, *Wilt not thou, O God? certainly thou wilt.* It is probable he spoke with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom, because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that *the elder should serve the younger,* and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, *Gen. xxvii. 37.*

5. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though providence has in some instances frowned upon us: though thou hast cast us off, yet thou wilt now go forth with our hosts, *ver. 11. Thou wilt comfort us again,* after the time that thou hast afflicted us. Cross events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in, whatever difficulties we meet with and not to faint.

6. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature, *ver. 12. Lord, give us help from trouble,* prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us; it is not unreasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from heaven: and it is a good plea, *Vain is the help of man.* It is really so, and therefore we are undone if God do not help us, we apprehend it so, and therefore depend upon thee for help, and have the more reason to expect it.

7. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, *ver. 13. (1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of ourselves, it is only through God that we shall do valiantly.* Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, but through Christ strengthening him, *Phil. iv. 13. (2.)* When we have acquitted ourselves never so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that treads down our enemies, else we with all valour cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

P S A L M. CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against was Saul, or Doeg, or Athaphel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings, and his persecutions; for that imprecation, *ver. 8. is applied to Judas,* *Acts i. 20. And the rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions not of passion but of the spirit of prophecy. 1. He lodges a complaint in the court of heaven of the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies, and with it an appeal to the righteous God, ver. 1—5. 2. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, ver. 6—20. 3. He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition, ver. 21—29. 4. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of this certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God, and keep close to him.*

To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **H**OLD not thy peace, O God of my praise. 2. For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3. They compassed me about also with words of hatred: and fought against me without a cause. 4. For my love, they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. 5. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people, that whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply themselves as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them: Thus David here,

1. He refers himself to God's judgment, *ver. 1. Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence,* *Psalm xvii. 2.* Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee. God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence; Lord, faith he, do not always do. The title he gives to God is observable, *O God of my praise;* the God in whom I glory, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own; from whom I have every thing that is my praise; or, the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising. He calls God the God of his mercy, *Psalm lix. 10. here the God of his praise;* forasmuch as God is the God of our mercies, we must make him the God of our praises; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

2. He complains of his enemies, shewing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. (1.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they are wicked, they delight in doing mischief, *ver. 2. their words are words of hatred,* *ver. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man because of his goodness.* They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and fight against me to cut me off if they could. (2.) They were notorious liars, and that is two of the seven things which the Lord hates. They are deceitful in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, with a lying tongue. They were equally false in their own flatteries and in their calumnies. (3.) They were both politic and restless in their designs. They compassed me about on all sides, so that which way soever I looked I could see nothing but what made against me. (4.) They were unjust, their accusations of him, and sentence against him were all groundless, they have fought against me without a cause, I never gave them any provocation; nay, which was worst of all, (5.) They were very ungrateful, and rewarded him evil for good, *ver. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them; and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him but on the contrary they were the more exasperated, because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him, ver. 4. For my love they are my adversaries.* The more he endeavoured to gratify them, the more they hated him. We may wonder that

that it is possible any should be so wicked: and yet since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; *but I give myself unto prayer*, ver. 4. *I pray*, so it is in the original; I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer. A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles *Acts* vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it: let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*. Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with *words of hatred* and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his good works, John x. 32. and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them; *Father forgive them*.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. 8. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. 9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10. Let his children be continual vagabonds and beg: let them seek their bread also out of the desolate places. 11. Let the executioner catch all that he hath: and let the stranger spoil his labour. 12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following, let their name be blotted out. 14. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16. Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones. 19. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20. Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, John xix. 11. he imprecates and predicts destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan Friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses: and particularly he tells of a lady in France, that being at variance with her own and only son, she hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. And greater impiety can scarce be imagined, than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ; to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

1. The imprecations here are very terrible; wo, and a thousand woes to that man against whom God saith *Amen* to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this ill man,

(1.) That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction and condemnation, ver. 6, 7. *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he hath been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked one over him*, so some; i. e. Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face. *Let Satan stand at his right hand*, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate, who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee Satan*, Zech. iii. 1, 2. when he shall be judged at men's bar, let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. *Let his prayer become sin*, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will be in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

(2.) That being condemned he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. 1. That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst of the sword of justice: *Let his days be few*, or shortened; as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live, ver. 8. *Such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*. 2. That consequently all his places shall be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college,

of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, *Acts* i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. 3. That his family should be bereaved and beguared; that *his wife* should be made a widow, and *his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, ver. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, they might do pretty well; but they shall be *vagabonds and beg*, shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to *seek their bread*, ver. 10. because they are conscious to themselves what reason all mankind has to hate them for their father's sake. 4. That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated, ver. 11. *Let the extortioner*, the officer, *seize all that he hath*, and let the stranger, that was nothing akin to his estate, *spoil his labour*; either for his crimes or for his debts, John v. 4; 5. That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shewed mercy, there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by *favouring his fatherless children*, when he is gone, ver. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness this way, that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them; which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault but their infelicity; 6. That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace, ver. 13. *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction*, so Dr. Hammond: *and in the next generation let their name be blotted out*, or remembered with contempt and indignation; and, ver. 15. let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty and shame and misery upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

2. The ground of these imprecations speaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

(1.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinners posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought in, the account, ver. 14. 15. *The iniquity of his father, and the sin of his mother*. These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood, justly doth the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that has been shed upon the earth from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, *filled up the measure of their fathers*, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them, as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us, and on our children*.

(2.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

1. He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink, ver. 16. *He remembered not to shew mercy*, remembered not those considerations which would have induced him to shew mercy; remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him; but persecuted the poor whom he should have protected and relieved; and *slay the broken in heart*, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

2. He had loved cursing; and therefore let the curse come upon his head, ver. 17, 18, 19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty, he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*, i. e. he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. *He clothed himself with cursing*, was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it: Was he fond of cursing? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water*, and swell him as with a dropsey, and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is *quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow*: it works powerfully and effectually, it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass it on every side as a garment, ver. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecation with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, I wish it may be so, but I know it shall be so; *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord*, ver. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the LORD, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting: and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me, they shaked their heads. 26. Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: 27. That they may know that this is thy hand: that thou LORD, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise let them be ashamed: but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame: and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth: yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David

David having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which it is probable gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: *I am poor and needy*, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help. (1.) He was troubled in mind, *ver. 22. My heart is troubled within me*; not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt; and a wounded spirit, who can bear? who can heal? (2.) He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth*; as good as gone already. Man's life at best is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the preface of night approaching, like the shadow when it declines. (3.) He was unsettled: *tossed up and down like the locust*; his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away, *ver. 24. My knees are weak through fasting*; either forced fasting for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick; or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others, *Psalm xxxv. 13—19. 10. My flesh faileth of fatness*, i. e. it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones; but better have this leanness in the body while the soul prospers and is in health, than like Israel have leanness sent into the soul while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies; *ver. 25. his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter*; and upon both those accounts God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*.

2. He prays for mercy to himself: in general, *ver. 21. Do thou for me, O God, the Lord*; appear for me, act for me. If God be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He doth not describe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom: *Lord, do for me what seemeth good in thine eyes*. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me. More particularly he prays, *ver. 26. Help me, O Lord my God, O save me*. Help me under my trouble. Save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty. He prays, *ver. 28. Though they curse, bless thou*. Here he despiseth the caustic curses of his enemies; *let them curse*. He said of Shimei, *so let him curse*. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering, or the scallow by flying. *Prov. xxvi. 2. (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; bless thou*, and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us we need not care who curseth us; for *how can they curse whom God hath not cursed?* nay, whom he hath blessed, *Numb. xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent*. And those whom we justly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, *John ix. 35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ill they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition; Let them curse, but bless thou*. He prays, *ver. 28. Let thy servant rejoice*. They that know how to value God's blessing, let them be sure of it and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might be *ashamed*, *ver. 29. clothed with shame*, *ver. 29. and that they might cover themselves with their own confusion*. That they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and manifest their folly before all men; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, *Neh. vi. 16. Nay*, this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies: sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves, and cover themselves with their own confusion.

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; *Do for me, for thy name's sake*, *ver. 21. especially the honour of his goodness, by which he hath proclaimed his name; Deliver me, because thy mercy is good*, i. e. it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy: let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation.

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith; joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promiseth God that he will praise him, *ver. 30. I will greatly praise the Lord*, not only with my heart, but with my mouth, *I will praise him*, not in secret only, but among the multitude. 2. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, *ver. 31. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, nigh to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand, as his patron and advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; to save him from those that condemn his soul, and would execute it if they could. God was David's protector, in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved, Psalm xvi. 8. saved his soul from those that pretended to be judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their soul to him.*

P S A L M CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only and wholly concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers and expected by them; it is plain the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David in spirit calls Christ his Lord; though he were his son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves grieved, than to make it a question; whether David doth indeed speak of the Messiah or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Mat. xxi. 41, &c.* Of him therefore no doubt the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ, as our Redeemer executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. 1. His prophetic office, *ver. 2. 2. His priestly office, ver. 4. 3. His kingly office, ver. 1—3; 4; 5, 6. 4. His states of humiliation and exaltation, ver. 7. In singing this psalm we must act faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and to triumph in him as our prophet, priest and king, by*

whom we hope to be ruled and taught, and saved for ever; and as the prophet, priest, and king of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality and power; and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it; the title calls it David's psalm; for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we in singing of it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

1. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this because he himself doth, *Mat. xxiv. 14. David in spirit calleth him Lord*. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was, paid him tithes, *Heb. vii. 4* so we may with this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus, that David, that great man, called him his Lord; by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his Lord, because he was the Lord that was to descend from him. His son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her Saviour, *Luke vii. 47. even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones*.

2. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory, 2 Pet. i. 17. from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself*. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestible; for what God hath said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God hath said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

3. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and entrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth. *Sit thou at my right hand*. Sitting is a resting posture; after his services and sufferings he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; sit to give law, to give judgment; it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever; sitting at the right hand of God notes both his dignity and his dominion; the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him by the Father: All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, passeth through his hand.

4. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be much at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world; there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place; and such a decorum there will be in it; he will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, *Mal. iv. 3. 3. God Father has undertaken to do it; I will make them thy footstool, who can do it. 4. It will not be done presently. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool; this the apostle observes, Heb. ii. 8. We see not yet all things put under him*. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet at last on the necks of all his enemies.

5. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem, *ver. 2. The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion*, by which the kingdom shall be erected, maintained and administered. The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is King upon the holy hill of Zion. *Psalm ii. 6. in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain on which the law was given, Heb. xii. 18—23. Gal. iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David; for he was the Son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David*. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it; the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, *Isa. liii. 1. Rom. i. 16. the gospel coming both in word and in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first; and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God*. This strong rod God sent forth, he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the word and administered the Spirit, *Gal. iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin at Jerusalem. See Luke xxiv. 47—49. Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, Isa. ii. 3. Note, The gospel of Christ being sent of God is mighty through God to do wonders, 2 Cor. x. 4. It is the rod of Christ's strength*. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, noting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, noting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and good shepherd.

1. That his kingdom being set up shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, and give laws; and govern his subjects by them; shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, *Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him*. Christ's church is a lily among thorns

thorns, and his disciples are sent forth *as sheep in the midst of wolves*: He knows *where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is*, Rev. ii. 13. and this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, maugre all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. *Great is the truth and will prevail.*

7. That he should have a great number of subjects that should be to him for a name and a praise, *ver. 3.*

(1.) That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestible title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself *a peculiar people*, Tit. ii. 14. They are his right, antecedent to their consent: he *had much people in Corinth* before they were converted, *Acts xviii. 10.*

(2.) That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; al-luding to servants that choose their service, and are not captivated to it: they love their masters, and would not go out free: to soldiers that are volunteers and not pressed men: Here am I, send me: to sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; *we present ourselves living sacrifices*. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

(3.) That they should be so *in the day of his power*. *In the day of his muster*, so some; when thou art listing soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be listed; let but the standard be set up, and the *Gentiles will seek to it*. Isa. xi. 10.---lx. 3. Or, when thou art drawing them out to battle, they shall be willing to follow the *Lamb whithersoever he goes*, Rev. xiv. 4. *In the day of thine armies*, so some; when the first preachers of the gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are *thy people shall be willing*; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom. *In the day of thy strength*, so we take it. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great author, and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with power of the word to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

(4.) That they should be so *in the beauty of holiness*; that his, 1. They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness: they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the light given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. 2. They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for *by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest*. They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family, and that which *become his house for ever*. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear: the armies of heaven follow him in *fine linen, clean and white*, Rev. xix. 14.

(5.) That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him: the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince: *From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth*, i. e. abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were *multitudes that believed*; a remnant of Jacob, that was as a *dew from the Lord*, Micah v. 7. Isa. lxiv. 4---8. Or thus, *From the womb of the morning*, i. e. from their very childhood, *thou hast the dew of thy people's youth*; i. e. their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee: *The dew of the youth* is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful shew of young people's flocking to Christ, which would be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

(6.) That he should be not only a king, but a priest, *ver. 4.* The same Lord that said, *Sit thou at my right hand, secure and will not repent, Thou art a priest*, i. e. be thou a priest; for by the word of this oath he was consecrated. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest; he was appointed to that office and faithfully executes it; he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin*, Heb. v. 1. to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's acceptance: He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. He is *a priest for ever*: he was designed for a priest in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old Testament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xiii. 8. He is said to be *a priest for ever*, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace, but this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain eternally. 2. He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle argueth, to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. *The Lord hath sworn*, to shew that in the commission there was no implicit reserve of a power of revocation, for *he will not repent*, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 33. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of Christians: the priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it may be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. 4. He is a priest not of the order of Aaron, but that of Melchizedek, which as it was prior, so it was upon many accounts superior to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood; Melchizedek, was *a priest upon his throne*, so is Christ, Zech. vi. 13. king of righteousness and king of peace: Melchizedek had no successor, nor hath Christ, his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, Heb. vii. and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shews was no new motion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the alpha and omega of both.

5. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

1. Conquering his enemies, *ver. 5, 6.* in order to the making them his *footstool*, *ver. 1.* Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interests of his kingdom, among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe, here,

(1.) The conqueror: *The Lord Adonai*; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his enemies: *The Lord at thy right hand; O church*, so some: i. e. the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them, this is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See Psalm cix. 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, Psalm xvi. 8. Some observe that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates, that if he would have Christ to appear for us, we must *bestir ourselves*. 2 Sam. v. 24. Or rather *At thy right hand, O God*, referring to *ver. 1.* in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies as happiness to his people.

(2.) The time fixed for this victory. *In the day of his wrath*, i. e. the time appointed for it. When the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, 1. Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to *kiss the Son*, for he can be angry, Psal. ii. 12. And we read of the *wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. 2. There is a day of wrath set, a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Rev. vi. 17.

(3.) The extent of this victory. 1. It shall return very high, *He shall strike through kings*. The greatest of men that set themselves against Christ shall be made to fall before him, though they be *kings of the earth*, and rulers that use to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, Psal. ii. 1---5. Be their power among men never so despotic, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength never so great, their policies never so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and above them, wherein they deal proudly. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. 2. It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up *among the heathen*, and in many countries wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only but his hand shall find them out, Psal. xxi. 8. and his wrath shall follow them. He will *plead with all nations*, Joel. iii. 2.

(4.) The equity of this victory: *He shall judge among them*. It is not a military execution which is done in fury, but a judicial one; before he condemns and slays, he will judge, i. e. he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be justified when he speaks, and the heavens may declare his righteousness. See Rev. xix. 1, 2.

(5.) The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies: *He shall strike them through*, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; he shall *wound their heads*, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, Gen. iii. 11. that he should *bruise the serpent's head*. He shall *wound the head of his enemies*, Psal. lxxviii. 21. some read it, *He shall wound him that is the head over many countries*; either Satan or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that he shall fill the places with dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa. xxxiv. 3. See Ezek. xxxix. 12---14. Rev. xiv. 20.---xix. 17. The filling of the valleys, (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps notes the filling of hell, (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnon, Isa. xxx. 33. Jer. vii. 32.) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

2. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, *ver. 7.* for their benefit.

1. He shall be humbled. *He shall drink of the brook in the way*, i. e. that bitter cup which the Father puts into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work that he shall drink puddle water out of the dikes in the highway; (so some.) The wrath of God running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the *brook in the way*, the way of his undertaking, which he must go through with; or which run in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven; Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a curse for us, and therefore when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron, John xviii. 1. he drank deep of this black brook, (so Kidron signifies) this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted: *Therefore shall he lift up the head*. When he died he bowed his head, John xix. 30. but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lift up the head as a conqueror, yea more than a conqueror. This notes not only his exaltation, but his exaltation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it, Col. ii. 15. *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them*. David spoke as a type of him in this, Psal. xxvii. 6. *Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation, because he humbled himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. Because he drank of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him shall also reign with him.

P S A L M CXI.

This and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise, the title of it is Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord: intimating that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm, with hearts disposed to praise God.. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly; and two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the two last. The psalmist exhorting to praise God, (1.) Sets himself for an example, *ver. 1.* (2.) Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, *ver. 2---9.* (3.) He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, *ver. 10.*

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD, I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2. The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being *Hallelujah*, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, *ver. 1.* What duty we call others to we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts: for such is the psalmist's resolution here, *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.* My heart, my whole heart being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet-council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families, and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up, as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

2. He recommends to us the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him, the dispensation of his providence both towards the world, and towards the church, and particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent; great like himself, there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling; they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to enquire more particularly into them, that the works of the Lord are great, *ver. 2.* There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, *ver. 3.* it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, *O wheel*, Ezek. x. 13. Take altogether, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive. They are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Note, 1. All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he doth: nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into, the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. 2. They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. 3. These works of God that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; they that seek shall find (so some read it) found of all them that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns, (so Dr. Hammond) for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, *Psalm xxv. 14.*

3. They are all just and holy, *His righteousness endureth for ever.* Whatever he doth, he never did, nor never will do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, *Eccles. iii. 14.* because the righteousness of them doth so.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling, that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them, *ver. 4.* He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, i. e. He hath done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he hath instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover; *He hath made him a memorial by his wonderful works;* so some read it; see *Isa. lxiii. 10.* by that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are kind; in them the Lord shows that he is gracious and full of compassion. As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say they are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, *The Lord God is gracious and merciful*, *Exod. xxiv. 6.* God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a farther instance of his grace and compassion, that he hath given meat to them that fear him, *ver. 5.* He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he doth to others by common providence; but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; as it follows, *he will be ever mindful of his covenant:* so that they can taste covenant-love even in covenant mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness. Others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance according to the promise, *Gen. xv. 14.* When God brake the heads of Leviathan he gave him to be meat to his people, *Psalm lxxiv. He hath given prey to them that fear him;* so the margin has it, not only fed them but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnest of what he will do according to his promise; *He will be ever mindful of his covenant,* for he has ever been so; and as he never did, so he never will let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6. He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. 8. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9. He sent redemption unto his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth for ever.

We are taught to give glory to God,

1. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people of Israel of old and of late: *He hath shewed his people the power of his works*, *ver. 6.* in what he has wrought for them; many a time he hath given proofs of his omnipotence, and shewed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are instanced in to shew the power of his works.

(1.) The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that he might give them, or in giving them the heritage of the heathen. This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued; and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel and became tributaries to David. Herein God shewed his sovereignty, in disposing kingdoms as he pleaseth, and his might in making good his disposals. If God would make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel or stay his hand?

(2.) The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies, *ver. 9.* *He sent redemption unto his people:* not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

2. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

(1.) What God hath done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot, *ver. 7.* *The works of his hand are verity and judgment*, i. e. *ver. 8.* *they are done in truth and uprightness;* all he doth is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom and the purpose of his will; all well done; and therefore there is nothing in them to be altered or amended, but they are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done true will last, will neither go to decay nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

(2.) What God hath said shall never be unsaid; *all his commandments are sure;* all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; *He hath spoken, and shall he not make it good?* No doubt he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable and not to be repealed. His promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of none effect. They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures either in his laws or in his providences. All is said as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood made them unstable in all their ways, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation. *He has commanded his covenant for ever.* God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that hath an incontestible authority to prescribe both what we must do, and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant, and what he has threatened in the curses of it, *Psalm cv. 8.*

3. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever, i. e. he is to be everlastingly praised.

(1.) Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see and say that God is great, and greatly to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appears in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy therefore it is reverend and to be thought of, and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, *Psalm lxxviii. 35.* *Let x. 3.*

(2.) Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God, that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him and obedience to him is as much our interest as it is our duty.

1. Our reverence of him is so; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* It is not only reasonable itself that we should fear God, because his name is reverend, and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom, it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us; in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, i. e. as we read it, it is the beginning of wisdom; men never begin to be wise, till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it; or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent; the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom to worship God, and give honour to him as our Father and Master. They manage well that always act under the government of his holy fear.

2. Our obedience to him is so, *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments; not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding, i. e. 1. They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God! Compare *Prov. iii. 4.* *So shall thou find favour and good understanding.* God and man will look upon such as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. 2. They understand well (1.) It is a sign they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best, that make God's law their rule; and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding they have that know God's commandments, and can discourse learnedly of them; but a good understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. (2.) It is the way to understand better. *A good understanding, are they to all that do them*, i. e. the fear of the Lord and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation. *If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ*, *John vii. 17.* *Good success have all they that do them*, so the margin; according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, *Josh. i. 8.* *Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and shall have good success.* We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord, than to the good God; *His praise endures for ever;* it is not of men perhaps, but it is of God, *Rom. ii. 29.* and that praise which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

that it is possible any should be so wicked; and yet since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; *but I give myself unto prayer*, ver. 4. *I prayer*, so it is in the original; I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer. A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles *Acts* vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it: let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*. Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with *words of hatred* and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his *good works*, John x. 32. and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them; *Father forgive them*.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. 8. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. 9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10. Let his children be continual vagabonds and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of the desolate places. 11. Let the executioner catch all that he hath: and let the stranger spoil his labour. 12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following, let their name be blotted out. 14. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16. Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones. 19. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20. *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.*

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, John xix. 11. he imprecates and predicts destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan Friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, that being at variance with her own and only son, she hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. And greater impiety can scarce be imagined, than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ; to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

1. The imprecations here are very terrible; wo, and a thousand woes to that man against whom God saith *Amen* to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this ill man,

(1.) That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction and condemnation, ver. 6, 7. *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he hath been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked one over him*, so some; i. e. Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, let his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face. *Let Satan stand at his right hand*, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate, who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee Satan*, Zech. iii. 1, 2. when he shall be judged at men's bar, let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and *let him be condemned*; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. *Let his prayer become sin*, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will be in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

(2.) That being condemned he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. 1. That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst of the sword of justice: *Let his days be few*, or shortened; as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live, ver. 8. *such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*. 2. That consequently all his places shall be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college,

of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, *Acts* i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. 3. That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that *his wife* should be made a widow, and *his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, ver. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, they might do pretty well; but they shall be *vagabonds and beg*, shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek *their bread*, ver. 10. because they are conscious to themselves what reason all mankind has to hate them for their father's sake. 4. That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated, ver. 11. *Let the extortioner*, the officer, seize all that he hath, and let the stranger, that was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour; either for his crimes or for his debts, John v. 4; 5. That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shewed mercy, there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, ver. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents wickedness this way, that the bowels of mens compassion are shut up from them; which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault but their infelicity; 6. That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace, ver. 13. *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction*, so Dr. Hammond: *and in the next generation let their name be blotted out*, or remembered with contempt and indignation; and, ver. 15. let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty and shame and misery upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

2. The ground of these imprecations speaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

(1.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinners posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account, ver. 14. 15. *The iniquity of his father, and the sin of his mother*. These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood, justly doth the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that has been shed upon the earth from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of their fathers, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them, as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us, and on our children*.

(2.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

1. He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink, ver. 16. *He remembered not to shew mercy*, remembered not those considerations which would have induced him to shew mercy; remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him: but persecuted the poor whom he should have protected and relieved; and *shew the broken in heart*, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

2. He had loved cursing; and therefore let the curse come upon his head, ver. 17, 18, 19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty, he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*, i. e. he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. *He clothed himself with cursing*, was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it: Was he fond of cursing? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water*, and swell him as with a dropsey, and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow: it works powerfully and effectually, it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass it on every side as a garment, ver. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecation with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, I wish it may be so, but I know it shall be so; *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord*, ver. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the LORD, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting: and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me, they shook their heads. 26. Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: 27. That they may know that this is thy hand: that thou LORD, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise let them be ashamed: but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame: and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth: yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David

David having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which it is probable gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: *I am poor and needy*, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help. (1.) He was troubled in mind, *ver. 22. My heart is troubled within me*; not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt; and a wounded spirit, who can heal? who can heal? (2.) He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth*; as good as gone, already. Man's life at best is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the preface of night approaching, *like the shadow when it declines*. (3.) He was unsettled; *tossed up and down like the locust*: his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away, *ver. 24. My knees are weak through fasting*; either forced fasting for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick; or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others, *Psalm xxxv. 13—19. 10. My flesh faileth of fatness*, i. e. it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones; but better have this leanness in the body while the soul prospers and is in health, than like Israel have leanness sent into the soul while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies; *ver. 25. his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter*; and upon both those accounts God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached: he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*.

2. He prays for mercy to himself: in general, *ver. 21. Do thou for me, O God, the Lord*; appear for me, act for me. If God be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He doth not describe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom; *Lord, do for me what seemeth good in thine eyes*. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me. More particularly he prays, *ver. 26. Help me, O Lord my God, O save me*. Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty. He prays, *ver. 28. Though they curse, bless thou*. Here he despiseth the causeless curses of his enemies; *let them curse*. He said of Shimei, *so let him curse*. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by ranting, or the swallow by flying. *Prov. xxvi. 2. (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; bless thou, and then it is no matter though they curse*. If God bless us we need not care who curseth us; for how can they curse whom God hath not cursed? nay, whom he hath blessed, *Numb. xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent*. And those whom we justly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, *John ix. 35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ill they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition; Let them curse, but bless thou*. He prays, *ver. 28. Let thy servant rejoice*. They that know how to value God's blessing, let them be sure of it and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed, *ver. 28. clothed with shame*, *ver. 29. and that they might cover themselves with their own confusion*. That they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and manifest their folly before all men; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, *Neh. vi. 16. Nay, this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies: sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves, and cover themselves with their own confusion*.

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; *Do for me, for thy name's sake*, *ver. 21. especially the honour of his goodness, by which he hath proclaimed his name; Deliver me, because thy mercy is good*, i. e. it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy: let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation.

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith; joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promiseth God that he will praise him, *ver. 30. I will greatly praise the Lord*, not only with my heart, but with my mouth, *I will praise him*, not in secret only, but among the multitude. 2. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, *ver. 31. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, nigh to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand, as his patron and advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; *to save him from those that condemn his soul*, and would execute it if they could. God was David's protector, in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, *stood at his right hand*, so that he was not moved, *Psalm xvi. 8. saved his soul from those that pretended to be judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their soul to him*.

P S A L M CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only and wholly concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers and expected by them; it is plain the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David in spirit calls Christ his Lord, though he were his son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves grieved, than to make it a question; whether David doth indeed speak of the Messiah or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Mat. xxi. 41, &c.* Of him therefore no doubt the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ as our Redeemer executes the office of a prophet; of a priest; and of a king, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. 1. His prophetic office, *ver. 2. 2. His priestly office*, *ver. 4. 3. His kingly office*, *ver. 1—3; 4; 5, 6. 4. His state of humiliation and exaltation*, *ver. 7. In singing this psalm we must all faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and to triumph in him as our prophet, priest and king, by*

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whom we hope to be ruled and taught, and saved for ever; and as the prophet, priest, and king of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality and power; and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it; the title calls it David's psalm; for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we in singing of it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

1. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this because he himself doth, *Mat. xxiv. 14. David in spirit calleth him Lord*. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was, paid him tithes, *Heb. vii. 4. so we may with this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus*; that David, that great man, called him his Lord; by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his Lord, because he was the Lord that was to descend from him. His son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her Saviour; *Luke vii. 47. even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones*.

2. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself; *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory, 2 Pet. i. 17. from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself*. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestible; for what God hath said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God hath said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

3. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and entrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth. *Sit thou at my right hand*. Sitting is a resting posture; after his services and sufferings he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; fit to give law, to give judgment; it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever; sitting at the right hand of God notes both his dignity and his dominion; the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him by the Father: All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, passeth through his hand.

4. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be much at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world; there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place; and such a decorum there will be in it; he will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, *Mal. iv. 3. 3. God Father has undertaken to do it; I will make them thy footstool, who can do it. 4. It will not be done presently. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool; this the apostle observes, Heb. ii. 8. We see not yet all things put under him*. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet at last on the necks of all his enemies.

5. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem, *ver. 2. The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion*, by which the kingdom shall be erected, maintained and administered. The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is *King upon the holy hill of Zion*. *Psalm ii. 6. in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain on which the law was given, Heb. xii. 18—23. Gal. iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David; for he was the Son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David*. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it; the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, *Isa. liii. 1. Rom. i. 16. the gospel coming both in word and in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God*. This strong rod God sent forth, he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the word and administered the Spirit, *Gal. iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin at Jerusalem. See Luke xxiv. 47—49. Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, Isa. lii. 3. Note, The gospel of Christ being sent of God is mighty through God to do wonders, 2 Cor. x. 4. It is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, noting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, noting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and good shepherd.*

1. That his kingdom being set up shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, and give laws; and govern his subjects by them; shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, *Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him*. Christ's church is a lily among

that it is possible any should be so wicked; and yet since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; *but I give myself unto prayer*, ver. 4. *I prayer*, so it is in the original; I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer. A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles *Acts* vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam. xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it: let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*. Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with *words of hatred* and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his *good works*, John x. 32. and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them; *Father forgive them*.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. 8. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. 9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10. Let his children be continual vagabonds and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of the desolate places. 11. Let the executioner catch all that he hath: and let the stranger spoil his labour. 12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following, let their name be blotted out. 14. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16. Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment: so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones. 19. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20. *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.*

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, John xix. 11. he imprecates and predicts destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan Friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, that being at variance with her own and only son, she hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. And greater impiety can scarce be imagined, than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ; to kindle strife with words snatched from God's altar, and call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

1. The imprecations here are very terrible; wo, and a thousand woes to that man against whom God saith *Amen* to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this ill man,

(1.) That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction and condemnation, ver. 6, 7. *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he hath been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked one over him*, so some; i. e. Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, let his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face. *Let Satan stand at his right hand*, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate, who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee Satan*, Zech. iii. 1, 2. when he shall be judged at men's bar, let not his usual acts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. *Let his prayer become sin*, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will be in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

(2.) That being condemned he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. 1. That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst of the sword of justice: *Let his days be few, or shortened*; as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live, ver. 8. *Such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*. 2. That consequently all his places shall be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college,

of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, *Acts* i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. 3. That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that *his wife* should be made a widow, and *his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, ver. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if when they left their father, they had a competency to live upon, they might do pretty well; but they shall be *vagabonds and beg*, shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to *seek their bread*, ver. 10. because they are conscious to themselves what reason all mankind has to hate them for their father's sake. 4. That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated, ver. 11. *Let the extortioner*, the officer, *seize all that he hath, and let the stranger*, that was nothing akin to his estate, *spoil his labour*; either for his crimes or for his debts, John v. 4, 5. 5. That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shewed mercy, *there shall be none to extend mercy to him*, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, ver. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness this way, that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them; which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault but their infelicity; 6. That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace, ver. 13. *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction*, so Dr. Hammond: *and in the next generation let their name be blotted out*, or remembered with contempt and indignation; and, ver. 15. let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty and shame and misery upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

2. The ground of these imprecations speaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

(1.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinners posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account, ver. 14, 15. *The iniquity of his father, and the sin of his mother*. These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood, justly doth the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that has been shed upon the earth from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, *filled up the measure of their fathers*, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them, as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us, and on our children*.

(2.) To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

1. He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink, ver. 16. *He remembered not to shew mercy*, remembered not those considerations which would have induced him to shew mercy; remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him; but persecuted the poor whom he should have protected and relieved; and *slay the broken in heart*, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

2. He had loved cursing; and therefore let the curse come upon his head, ver. 17, 18, 19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty, he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*, i. e. he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and *so let all good be far from him*. *He clothed himself with cursing*, was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it: Was he fond of cursing? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water*, and swell him as with a dropsy, and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is *quick and powerful*, and divides between the joints and the marrow: it works powerfully and effectually, it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass it on every side as a garment, ver. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecation with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, I wish it may be so, but I know it shall be so; *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord*, ver. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the LORD, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting: and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me, they shaked their heads. 26. Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: 27. That they may know that this is thy hand: that thou LORD, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise let them be ashamed: but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame: and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth: yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David

David having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which it is probable gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: *I am poor and needy*, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help. (1.) He was troubled in mind, *ver. 22. My heart is troubled within me*; not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt: *and a wounded spirit, who can heal? who can heal?* (2.) He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth*; as good as gone already: Man's life at best is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the preface of night approaching, *like the shadow when it declines*. (3.) He was unsettled: *tossed up and down like the locust*; his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away, *ver. 24. My knees are weak through fasting*; either forced fasting for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick; or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others, *Psalm xxxv. 13—19. 10. My flesh faileth of fatness*, i. e. it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones; but better have this leanness in the body while the soul prospers and is in health, than like Israel have leanness sent into the soul while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies, *ver. 25. his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter*; and upon both those accounts God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*.

2. He prays for mercy to himself: in general, *ver. 21. Do thou for me, O God, the Lord*; appear for me, act for me. If God be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He doth not describe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom: *Lord, do for me what seemeth good in thine eyes*. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me. More particularly he prays, *ver. 26. Help me, O Lord my God, O save me*. Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty. He prays, *ver. 28. Though they curse, bless thou*. Here he despiteth the curses and curses of his enemies; *let them curse*. He said of Shimei, *so let him curse*. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering, or the scallow by flying. *Prov. xvi. 2. (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; bless thou, and then it is no matter though they curse*. If God bless us we need not care who curseth us; for *how can they curse whom God hath not cursed?* nay, whom he hath blessed, *Numb. xxi. 8. Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent*. And those whom we justly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, *Christ found him*, John ix. 35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and with all the ill they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition; *Let them curse, but bless thou*. He prays, *ver. 28. Let thy servant rejoice*. They that know how to value God's blessing, let them be sure of it and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might be *affamed*, *ver. 28. clothed with shame*, *ver. 29. and that they might cover themselves with their own confusion*. That they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and manifest their folly before all men; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, *Neh. vi. 16. Nay, this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies; sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves, and cover themselves with their own confusion*.

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; *Do for me, for thy name's sake*, *ver. 21. especially the honour of his goodness, by which he hath proclaimed his name; Deliver me, because thy mercy is good*, i. e. it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy: let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation.

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith; joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promiseth God that he will praise him, *ver. 30. I will greatly praise the Lord*, not only with my heart, but with my mouth, *I will praise him*, not in secret only, but among the multitude. 2. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God, *ver. 31. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, nigh to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand, as his patron and advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; *to save him from those that condemn his soul*, and would execute it if they could. God was David's protector, in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, *stood at his right hand*, so that he was not moved, *Psalm xvi. 8. saved his soul from those that pretended to be judges of it, and received it into his own hands*. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their soul to him.

P S A L M CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only and wholly concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers and expected by them; it is plain the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David in spirit calls Christ his Lord, though he were his son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves grieved; than to make it a question, whether David doth indeed speak of the Messiah or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Mat. xxi. 41, &c.* Of him therefore no doubt the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ as our Redeemer executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. 1. His prophetic office, *ver. 2. 2. His priestly office, ver. 4. 3. His kingly office, ver. 1—3; 4, 5, 6. 4. His state of humiliation and exaltation, ver. 7. In singing this psalm we must act faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and to triumph in him as our prophet, priest and king, by*

whom we hope to be ruled and taught, and saved for ever; and as the prophet, priest, and king of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it; the title calls it David's psalm; for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we in singing of it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

1. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this because he himself doth, *Mat. xxiv. 14. David in spirit calleth him Lord*. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was, paid him tithes, *Heb. vii. 4* so we may with this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus; that David, that great man, called him his Lord; by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his Lord, because he was the Lord that was to defend from him. His son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her Saviour, *Luke vii. 47. even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones*.

2. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory, 2 Pet. i. 17. from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself*. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestible; for what God hath said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God hath said shall not be unfail. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

3. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and entrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth. *Sit thou at my right hand*. Sitting is a resting posture; after his services and sufferings he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; fit to give law, to give judgment; it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever; sitting at the right hand of God notes both his dignity and his dominion; the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him by the Father: All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, passeth through his hand.

4. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be much at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world; there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and the why they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place; and such a decorum there will be in it; he will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, *Mat. iv. 3. 3. God Father has undertaken to do it; I will make them thy footstool, who can do it. 4. It will not be done presently. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool; this the apostle observes, Heb. ii. 8. We see not yet all things put under him. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet at last on the necks of all his enemies.*

5. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem, *ver. 2. The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion*, by which the kingdom shall be erected, maintained and administered. The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is King upon the holy hill of Zion. *Psalm ii. 6. in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain on which the law was given, Heb. xii. 18—23. Gal. iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David; for he was the Son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it; the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, Isa. liii. 1. Rom. i. 16. the gospel coming both in word and in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth, he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the word and administered the Spirit, Gal. iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin at Jerusalem. See *Luke xxiv. 47—49. Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, Isa. ii. 3. Note, The gospel of Christ being sent of God is mighty through God to do wonders, 2 Cor. x. 4. It is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, noting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, noting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and good shepherd.**

1. That his kingdom being set up shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, and give laws; and govern his subjects by them; shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, *Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns*

thorns, and his disciples are sent forth *as sheep in the midst of wolves*: He knows *where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is*, Rev. ii. 13. and this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, maugre all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. *Great is the truth and will prevail.*

7. That he should have a great number of subjects that should be to him for a name and a praise, ver. 3.

(1.) That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestible title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself *a peculiar people*, Tit. ii. 14. They are his right, antecedent to their consent: he *had much people in Corinth* before they were converted, Acts xviii. 10.

(2.) That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; al- luding to servants that choose their service, and are not captivated to it: they love their masters, and would not go out free: to soldiers that are vol- unteers and not pressed men: Here am I, send me: to sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; *we present ourselves living sacrifices*. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

(3.) That they should be so *in the day of his power*. *In the day of his muster*, so some; when thou art lifting soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be listed; let but the standard be set up, and the *Gentiles will seek to it*, Isa. xi. 10.—lx. 3. Or, when thou art drawing them out to battle, they shall be willing to follow the *Lamb whithersoever he goes*, Rev. xiv. 4. *In the day of thine armies*, so some; when the first preachers of the gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are *thy people shall be willing*; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom. *In the day of thy strength*, so we take it. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great author, and the intrinsic ex- cellency of the thing themselves contained in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with power of the word to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

(4.) That they should be so *in the beauty of holiness*; that his, 1. They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness: they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. 2. They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for *by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest*. They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family, and that which *become his house for ever*. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear: the armies of heaven follow him *in fine linen, clean and white*, Rev. xix. 14.

(5.) That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him: the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince: *From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth*, i. e. abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a sum- mer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were *multitudes that believed; a remnant of Jacob*, that was as a *dew from the Lord*, Micah v. 7. Isa. lxiv. 4—8. Or thus, *From the womb of the morning*, i. e. from their very childhood, *thou hast the dew of thy people's youth*; i. e. their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee: *The dew of the youth* is a num- erous, illustrious, hopeful shew of young people's flocking to Christ, which would be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

(6.) That he should be not only a king, but a priest, ver. 4. The same Lord that said, *Sit thou at my right hand, swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest*, i. e. be thou a priest; for by the word of this oath he was consecrated. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest; he was ap- pointed to that office and faithfully executes it; he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin*, Heb. v. 1. to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's ac- ceptance: He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. He is *a priest for ever*: he was de- signed for a priest in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old Tes- tament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xiii. 8. He is said to be *a priest for ever*, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace, but this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. 3. He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle argueth, to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. *The Lord hath sworn*, to shew that in the commission there was no implicit re- ference of a power of revocation, for *he will not repent*, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 33. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of Christians: the priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it may be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. 4. He is a priest not of the order of Aaron, but that of Melchizedek, which as it was prior, so it was upon many accounts superior to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood; Melchizedek, was *a priest upon his throne*, so is Christ, Zech. vi. 13. king of righteousness and king of peace: Melchize- dek had no successor, nor hath Christ, his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, Heb. vii. and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shews was no new motion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the alpha and omega of both.

5. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

1. Conquering his enemies, ver. 5, 6. in order to the making them his *footstool*, ver. 1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the op- position made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interests of his king- dom, among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe, here,

(1.) The conqueror: *The Lord Adonai*; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his ene- mies: *The Lord at thy right hand; O church, so some; i. e. the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them*, this is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See Psalm cix. 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, Psalm xvi. 8. Some observe that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates, that if he would have Christ to appear for us, we must *bestir ourselves*, 2 Sam. v. 24. Or rather *At thy right hand, O God*, referring to ver. 1. in the dignity and domi- nion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies as happiness to his people.

(2.) The time fixed for this victory. *In the day of his wrath*, i. e. the time appointed for it. When the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, 1. Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to *kiss the Son*, for he can be *angry*, Psal. ii. 12. And we read of the *wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. 2. There is a day of wrath set, a year of recompences for the *controversy of Zion*, the year of the redeemed. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Rev. vi. 17.

(3.) The extent of this victory. 1. It shall return very high, *He shall strike through kings*. The greatest of men that set themselves against Christ shall be made to fall before him, though they be *kings of the earth*, and rulers that use to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, Psal. ii. 1—5. Be their power among men never so despotic, Christ will call them to an ac- count; be their strength never so great, their policies never so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and above them, wherein they deal proudly. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. 2. It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up *among the heathen*, and in many countries wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only but his hand shall find them out, Psal. xxi. 8. and his wrath shall follow them. He will *plead with all nations*, Joel. iii. 2.

(4.) The equity of this victory: *He shall judge among them*. It is not a military execution which is done in fury, but a judicial one; before he condemns and slays, he will judge, i. e. he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be *justified when he speaks*, and the *heavens may declare his righteousness*. See Rev. xix. 1, 2.

(5.) The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies: He shall strike them through, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; he shall wound their heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, Gen. iii. 11. that he should *bruise the serpent's head*. He shall wound the head of his enemies, Psal. lxviii. 21. some read it, *He shall wound him that is the head over many countries*; either Satan or Antichrist, whom *the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth*. He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that he shall fill the places with dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa. xxiv. 3, &c. Ezek. xxxix. 12—14. Rev. xiv. 20.—xix. 17. The filling of the valleys, (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps notes the filling of hell, (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnon, Isa. xxx. 33. Jer. vii. 32.) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

2. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, ver. 7. for their benefit.

1. He shall be humbled. *He shall drink of the brook in the way*, i. e. that bitter cup which the Father puts into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work that he shall drink pud- dle water out of the dikes in the highway; (so some.) The wrath of God running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the *brook in the way*, the way of his undertaking, which he must go through with; or which run in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven; Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a curse for us, and therefore when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron, John xviii. 1. he drank deep of this *black brook*, (so Kidron sig- nifies) this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted: *Therefore shall he lift up the head*. When he died he bowed his head, John xix. 30. but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lift up the head as a conqueror, yea more than a conqueror. This notes not only his exaltation, but his exul- tation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it, Col. ii. 15. *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them*. David spoke as a type of him in this, Psal. xxvii. 6. *Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation, because he humbled himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. Be- cause he drank of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him shall also reign with him.

P S A L M CXI.

This and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise, the title of it is Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord; intimating that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm, with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly; and two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the two last. The psalmist exhorting to praise God, (1.) Sets himself for an example, ver. 1. (2.) Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These obser- vations are intermixed, ver. 2—9. (3.) He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, ver. 10.

1. Praise

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD, I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2. The works of the LORD are great, fought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being *Hallelujah*, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, *ver. 1.* What duty we call others to we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts: for such is the psalmist's resolution here, *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.* My heart, my whole heart being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet-council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families, and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up, as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

2. He recommends to us the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him, the dispensation of his providence both towards the world, and towards the church, and particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent; great like himself, there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling; they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to enquire more particularly into them, that the works of the Lord are great, *ver. 2.* There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, *ver. 3.* it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, *O wheel*, Ezek. x. 13. Take altogether, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive. They are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Note, 1. A man that truly loves God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he doth: nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into, the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. 2. They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. 3. These works of God that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; they that seek shall find (so some read it) found of all them that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns, (so Dr. Hammond) for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, *Psal. xxv. 14.*

3. They are all just and holy, His righteousness endureth for ever. Whatever he doth, he never did, nor never will do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, *Eccles. iii. 14.* because the righteousness of them doth so.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling, that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them, *ver. 4.* He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, i. e. He hath done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he hath instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover; He hath made him a memorial by his wonderful works; so some read it; see *Isa. lxiii. 10.* by that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are kind; in them the Lord shows that he is gracious and full of compassion. As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say they are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, *The Lord God is gracious and merciful*, *Exod. xxiv. 6.* God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a farther instance of his grace and compassion, that he hath given meat to them that fear him, *ver. 5.* He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he doth to others by common providence; but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; as it follows, he will be ever mindful of his covenant: so that they can taste covenant-love even in covenant mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness. Others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance according to the promise, *Gen. xv. 14.* When God brake the heads of Leviathan he gave him to be meat to his people, *Psal. lxxiv.* He hath given prey to them that fear him; so the margin has it, not only fed them but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnest of what he will do according to his promise; He will be ever mindful of his covenant, for he has ever been so; and as he never did, so he never will let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

6. He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. 8. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9. He sent redemption unto his people, he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth for ever.

We are taught to give glory to God,

1. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people of Israel of old and of late: He hath shewed his people the power of his works, *ver. 6.* in what he has wrought for them; many a time he hath given proofs of his omnipotence, and shewed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are instanced in to shew the power of his works.

(1.) The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that he might give them, or in giving them the heritage of the heathen. This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued; and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel and became tributaries to David. Herein God shewed his sovereignty, in disposing kingdoms as he pleaseth, and his might in making good his disposals. If God would make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel or stay his hand?

(2.) The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies, *ver. 9.* He sent redemption unto his people: not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

2. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

(1.) What God hath done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot, *ver. 7.* The works of his hand are verity and judgment, i. e. *ver. 8.* they are done in truth and uprightness; all he doth is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom and the purpose of his will: all well done; and therefore there is nothing in them to be altered or amended, but they are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done true will last, will neither go to decay nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

(2.) What God hath said shall never be unsaid; all his commandments are sure; all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; *If he hath spoken, and shall he not make it good?* No doubt he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable and not to be repealed. His promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of none effect. They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures either in his laws or in his providences. All is said as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood made them unstable in all their ways, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retractation and revocation. He has commanded his covenant for ever. God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that hath an uncontested authority to prescribe both what we must do, and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant, and what he has threatened in the curses of it, *Psal. cv. 8.*

3. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever, i. e. he is to be everlastingly praised.

(1.) Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see and say that God is great, and greatly to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appears in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy therefore it is reverend and to be thought of, and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, *Psal. lxxviii. 25.* *Lev. x. 3.*

(2.) Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God, that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him and obedience to him is as much our interest as it is our duty.

1. Our reverence of him is so; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is not only reasonable itself that we should fear God, because his name is reverend, and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom, it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, i. e. as we read it, it is the beginning of wisdom; men never begin to be wise, till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it; or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent; the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom to worship God, and give honour to him as our Father and Maker. They manage well that always act under the government of his holy fear.

2. Our obedience to him is so, A good understanding have all they that do his commandments. Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments; not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding, i. e. 1. They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God! Compare *Prov. iii. 4.* So shall thou find favour and good understanding. God and man will look upon such as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. 2. They understand well (1.) It is a sign they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best, that make God's law their rule; and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding they have that know God's commandments, and can discourse learnedly of them; but a good understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. (2.) It is the way to understand better. A good understanding, are they to all that do them, i. e. the fear of the Lord and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation. If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ, *John vii. 17.* Good success have all they that do them, so the margin; according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, *Josh. i. 8.* Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and shalt have good success. We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord, than to the good God; His praise endures for ever; it is not of men perhaps, but it is of God, *Rom. ii. 20.* and that praise which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

P S A L M CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically as the former is, and is (like the former) intitled, Hallelujah; though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God; and whatever we have the pleasure of, he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shews how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. *We have here, (1.) The character of the righteous, ver. 1. (2.) The blessedness of the righteous. (1.) There is a blessing entailed on their posterity, ver. 2. (2.) There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. 1. Prosperity outward and inward, ver. 3. 2. Comfort, ver. 4. 3. Wisdom, ver. 5. 4. Stability, ver. 6, 7. 8. 5. Honour, ver. 6—9. (2.) The misery of the wicked, ver. 10. So that there is good and evil set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm, we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.*

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him: as he is their praise so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord, that there is a people in the world that fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

Now here we have,

1. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

(1.) They are well principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not that cry, Lord, Lord, but are indeed well affected to his government. 1. They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty, and deference to his will. The happy man is he that feareth the Lord, ver. 1. 2. They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that feareth the Lord, as a father with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, delighteth greatly in his commandments; is well pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them, they are written in his heart, it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant yoke; it is his delight to be searching into, and conversing with God's commandments: by reading, hearing, and meditation. Psalm i. 2. He not only delights in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government, as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he doth in religion, is done from the principles, because he sees amiableness in religion, and advantage by it.

(2.) They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright, ver. 2—4. that are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity: that is gospel perfection.

(3.) They are both just and good and kind in all their dealings: He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous, ver. 4. dares not do any wrong to any man, but doth to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God in the foregoing psalm, ver. 4. He is gracious and full of compassion; and here it is said of the good man, that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he doth good with, is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so doth he. One instance is given of his beneficence, ver. 5. He sheweth favour and lendeth. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obligeth the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is gracious and lendeth, Psalm xxxvii. 26. i. e. he doth it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he doth it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

2. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer these characters: Happiness, all happiness to the man that feareth the Lord. Whatever men think or say of them, God saith they are blessed; and his saying so, makes them so.

(1.) The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness, ver. 2. His seed shall be mighty on earth: perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to sound it firm. When good men themselves are happy in heaven, their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. The generation of the upright shall be blessed: if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them: beloved for thy father's sake. Rom. xi. 28 for so runs the covenant; I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed: while the seed of the evil doers shall never be renowned. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

(2.) They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, ver. 3. 1. They shall be blessed with outward prosperity, as far as is good for them; Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house, not in his heart; for he is one of those in whom the love of money reigns; perhaps not so much in his hands, for he only begins to raise the estate, but in his house, his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, 2. That which is more best is, that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. His wealth shall be in his house, for he must leave that to others; but his righteousness he himself shall have the comfort of it to himself, it endureth for ever. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall still hold fast his integrity;

which many that kept it in the stern, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing, when it doth not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's righteousness endureth for ever, in the crown of righteousness which fades not away.

(3.) They shall have comfort in affliction, ver. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. It is here implied, that good men may be in affliction, the promise doth not exempt them from that, they shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light to them, Micah vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightened when their outward condition is clouded; *Sat lucis intus*: In Egyptian darkness the Israelites had light in their dwellings. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest, the day dawns; nay, at evening time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

(4.) They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, ver. 5. He that doth good with his estate, God's providence shall increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence: He shall guide his affairs with discretion; and his God doth instruct him to discretion; and teach him, Isa. xxviii. 26: It is part of the character of a good man, that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity; he sheweth favour and lendeth; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced; but he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given, and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him that thus useth discretion, that God will give him more. They that most use their wisdom, see most their need of it, and ask it of God, who hath promised to give it liberally, Jam. i. 5. he will guide his words with judgment; so it is in the original; and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom, than in the government of the tongue: Blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

6. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. 9. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

1. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability: It is the happiness of a good man, that he shall not be moved for ever, ver. 6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm, and he shall never be moved: at least, not moved for ever; but if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again presently.

(1.) A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, i. e. a name for good things, with God and good people. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, ver. 6, and in this sense his righteousness endureth for ever, i. e. the memorial of it, ver. 9. There are those that do all they can to fully his reputation, and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are had in a lasting remembrance on earth; wherever the scripture is read, their good deeds are told for a memorial of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone, is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever with the reward of it, in the crown of glory that fadeth not away. They that are forgotten on earth and despised, are remembered there and honoured, and their righteousness found unto praise and honour and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man be exalted with honour, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men now in their pride lift up their horns on high, but they shall all be cut off, Psal. lxxv. 5—10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have defiled their horn in the dust, Job xvi. 15. but the day is coming when it shall be exalted with honour. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men, is their liberality and bounty to the poor: He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; he hath not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for; but he has dispersed it, given a portion to seven and also to eight, hath sown beside all waters, and by thus scattering he hath increased: and this is his righteousness which endureth for ever. Alms are called righteousness, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are obliged to; so that if we are not charitable, we are not just; we withhold good from those to whom it is due. The honour of this endureth for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day: I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

(2.) A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for so shall a man have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort; for he shall not be afraid, his heart is established, ver. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds fixed upon God, and so to keep them calm and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Observe, 1. It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to be afraid of evil tidings; not to be afraid of hearing bad news: and when they do, not to be put into confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse, but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say with blessed Paul, None of these things move me, neither will I fear though the earth be removed, Psalm xvi. 2. 2. The fixedness of the heart, and the establishment of that, is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our will resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even under all the unevennesses of providence, we are well fortified against the tosses of the timorous. 3. Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise in the word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. 4. They whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait

wait till they have gained their point. *He shall not be afraid until he see his desire upon his enemies*, i. e. till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies trodden under his feet, and as Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. *Until he look upon his oppressors*, so Dr. Hammond, i. e. till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, 2 Tim. iii. 11. *But out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

2. The vexation of sinners, ver. 10. Two things shall fret them. 1. The felicity of the righteous. *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour, and shall be grieved*: It will vex them to see their innocence cleared, and their low estate regarded; and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought and hoped to see, the favourites of heaven, and advanced to have dominion over them, Psalm xlix. 14. this will make them *gnash with their teeth, and pine away*. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the rottenness of their bones. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth, to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*: to see all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. 2. Their own disappointment: *The desire of the wicked shall perish*: their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

P S A L M CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. 1. *We are here called upon and urged to praise God*, ver. 1-3. 2. *We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths; in signing which we must with holy fear and love, give to God the glory of,* (1.) *The elevations of his glory and greatness*, ver. 4, 5. (2.) *The condescension of his grace and goodness*, ver. 6. -9. which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise ye the name of the LORD. 2. Blessed be the name of the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore. 3. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD's name is to be praised. 4. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high? 6. Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth? 7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: 8. That he may set him with princes even with the princes of his people. 9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm,

1. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name: the invitation is very pressing, *Praise ye the Lord*, and again, and again, *Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name*, for it is to be praised, ver. 1, 2, 3. This intimates, (1.) That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. (2.) That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and greatly enlarged. (3.) That it is work we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. (4.) That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in, there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough: and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

Observe, 1. From whom God hath praise; from his own people, they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call, *Praise O ye servants of the Lord*. They have most reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants, know him best and receive most of his favours, and it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their master, and do him what honour they can: if they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all christians are a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him that has called them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord, who though they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

2. From whom he ought to have praise:

1. From all ages, ver. 2. *From this time forth for ever more*, let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying with the psalmist, *Blessed be his name now and always*.

2. From all places: *From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same*, i. e. throughout the habitable world; let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun-rising, (and those that do so much count upon it that he will set) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised, i. e. it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from East to West, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be blessed for ever, when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven; so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God, Mal. i. 11. then from

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the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised, by some in all countries.

2. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, ver. 4, 5. We are in our praises to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high. (1.) *High above all nations*, their kings though never so pompous; their people though never so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is *major singulis*, he is *minor universis*, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; and they are before him as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15-17. Let all the nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. (2.) *High above the heavens*; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, *Lam. iii. 41*. His glory is *above the heavens*, i. e. above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his; above what they do, for they are under his command and do his pleasure; and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say with an holy admiration, *Who is like unto the Lord our God*, Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he *dwelleth on high*, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God who exalteth himself to dwell, who humbleth himself in heaven, and in earth. Some think there is a transposition, *He exalteth himself to dwell in heaven*, he humbleth himself to behold on earth, but the sense is plain enough as we take it: only observe, God is said to exalt himself, and to humble himself, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour, and the spring of his own grace, God's condescending goodness appears,

1. In the cognizance he takes of the world below him; his glory is above the nations, and above the heavens, and yet neither are neglected by him; God is great, yet he despiseth not any, Job xvi. 5. *He humbleth himself to behold* all his creatures, all his subjects, though he be infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency and felicity of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, *Dan. iv. 35*, even in this dominion he humbleth himself. (1.) It is condescension in him to *behold the things in heaven*, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. (2.) Much more is it condescension in him to *behold the things that are in the earth*, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and over-rule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice, and concerning ourselves about our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold the things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself.

2. In the particular favour he sometimes shews to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lesser lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor doth he only behold them, but does wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes; which shews that the world is governed not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

1. Those that have been long despicable are sometimes on a sudden made honourable, ver. 7, 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes*. (1.) Thus God doth sometimes magnify himself and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty; when he hath some great work to do, he chooseth to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles from fishing sent to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. (2.) Thus God doth sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people that have long groaned under the burden of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested, he was raised from the prison dust and set with princes. They that are wise will observe such returns of providence, and will understand by them the loving kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption of Jesus Christ, and not unfitly, for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it to the resurrection of the dead) nay, out of the dunghill of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purpose, 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7, 8.

2. Those that have been long barren are sometimes on a sudden made fruitful, ver. 9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their reproach. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house*, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she look well to the ways of her household, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a joyful mother of children, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, for joy that a man-child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, as Luke i. 14. and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving: *Praise ye the Lord*. Yet in this case rejoice with trembling; for though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her, or imbibed to her. This therefore may be applied to the gospel church among the Gentiles, the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, *Isa. liv. 11*. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, Gal. iv. 27. for which we, that being sinners of the Gentiles are children of the desolate, have reason to say, *Praise ye the Lord*.

P S A L M CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically as the former is, and is (like the former) intitled, Hallelujah; though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God; and whatever we have the pleasure of, he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shews how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. *We have here, (1.) The character of the righteous, ver. 1. (2.) The blessedness of the righteous. (1.) There is a blessing entailed on their posterity, ver. 2. (2.) There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. 1. Prosperity outward and inward, ver. 3. 2. Comfort, ver. 4. 3. Wisdom, ver. 5. 4. Stability, ver. 6, 7, 8. 5. Honour, ver. 6—9. (2.) The misery of the wicked, ver. 10. So that there is good and evil set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm, we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.*

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him: as he is their praise so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord, that there is a people in the world that fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

Now here we have,
1. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

(1.) They are well principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not that cry, Lord, Lord, but are indeed well affected to his government. 1. They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty, and deference to his will. The happy man is he that *feareth the Lord*, ver. 1. 2. They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that *feareth the Lord*, as a father with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, *delighteth greatly in his commandments*; is well pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them, they are written in his heart, it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant yoke; it is his delight to be searching into, and conversing with God's commandments; by reading, hearing, and meditation. Psalm i. 2. He not only delights in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government, as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he doth in religion, is done from the principles, because he sees amiableness in religion, and advantage by it.

(2.) They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright, ver. 2—4. that are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel perfection.

(3.) They are both just and good and kind in all their dealings: *He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous*, ver. 4. dares not do any wrong to any man, but doth to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God in the foregoing psalm, ver. 4. *He is gracious and full of compassion*; and here it is said of the good man, that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he doth good with, is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so doth he. One instance is given of his beneficence, ver. 5. *He sheweth favour and lendeth*. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obligeth the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is *gracious and lendeth*, Psalm xxxvii. 26. i. e. he doth it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he doth it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

2. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer these characters: Happiness, all happiness to the man that *feareth the Lord*. Whatever men think or say of them, God saith they are blessed; and his saying so, makes them so.

(1.) The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness, ver. 2. *His seed shall be mighty on earth*: perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to found it firm. When good men themselves are happy in heaven, their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed*: if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them: *beloved for thy father's sake*. Rom. xi. 28 for so runs the covenant; *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*: while the seed of the evil doers shall never be renowned. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

(2.) They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, ver. 3. 1. They shall be blessed with outward prosperity, as far as is good for them; *Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house*, not in his heart; for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns; perhaps not so much in his hands, for he only begins to raise the estate, but in his house, his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, 2. That which is much better is, that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. *His wealth shall be in his house*, for he must leave that to others; but *his righteousness* he himself shall have the comfort of it to himself, it *endureth for ever*. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall still hold fast his integrity;

which many that kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing, when it doth not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's righteousness endures for ever, in the crown of righteousness which fades not away.

(3.) They shall have comfort in affliction, ver. 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness*. It is here implied, that good men may be in affliction, the promise doth not exempt them from that, they shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, *when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light to them*, Micah vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome when their outward condition is clouded; *Sat lucis intus*: In Egyptian darkness the Israelites had light in their dwellings. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest, the day dawns; nay, at evening time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

(4.) They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, ver. 5. He that doth good with his estate, God's providence shall increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence: *He shall guide his affairs with discretion*; and his God doth instruct him to discretion; and teach him, Isa. xxviii. 26: It is part of the character of a good man, that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving; that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity; he *sheweth favour and lendeth*; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced; but he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given; and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him that thus useth discretion, that God will give him more. They that most use their wisdom, see most their need of it, and ask it of God, who hath promised to give it liberally, Jam. i. 5. *he will guide his words with judgment*; so it is in the original; and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom, than in the government of the tongue: Blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

6. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. 9. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

1. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability: It is the happiness of a good man, that *he shall not be moved for ever*, ver. 6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm, and *he shall never be moved*: at least, not moved for ever; but if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again presently.

(1.) A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, i. e. a name for good things, with God and good people. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*, ver. 6, and in this sense his righteousness endures for ever, i. e. the memorial of it, ver. 9. There are those that do all they can to fally his reputation, and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are had in a lasting remembrance on earth; wherever the scripture is read, their good deeds are told for a memorial of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone, is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever with the reward of it, in the crown of glory that *fadeth not away*. They that are forgotten on earth and despised, are remembered there and honoured, and *their righteousness found unto praise and honour and glory*, 1 Pet. i. 7. then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man be exalted with honour, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men now in their pride lift up their horns on high, but they shall all be cut off, Psalm lxxv. 5—10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have defiled their horn in the dust, Job xvi. 15. but the day is coming when it shall be exalted with honour. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men, is their liberality and bounty to the poor: *He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor*; he hath not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for; but he has dispersed it, *given a portion to seven and also to eight, hath sown beside all waters*, and by thus scattering he hath increased: and this is his righteousness which *endureth for ever*. Alms are called righteousness, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are obliged to; so that if we are not charitable, we are not just; *we withhold good from those to whom it is due*. The honour of this endureth for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day: *I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat*. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

(2.) A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for *so shall a man have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another*. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort; for *he shall not be afraid, his heart is established*, ver. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds staid upon God, and so to keep them calm and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Observe, 1. It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to be afraid of evil tidings; not to be afraid of hearing bad news: and when they do, not to be put into confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse, but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say with blessed Paul, *None of these things move me*, neither will I fear though the earth be removed, Psalm xvi. 2. 2. The fixedness of the heart, and the establishment of that, is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our will resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even under all the unevennesses of providence, we are well fortified against the tosses of the timorous. 3. Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise in the word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. 4. They whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait

wait till they have gained their point. *He shall not be afraid until he see his desire upon his enemies*, i. e. till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies trodden under his feet, and as Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. *Until he look upon his oppressors*, so Dr. Hammond, i. e. till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, *2 Tim. iii. 11. But out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

2. The vexation of sinners, ver. 10. Two things shall fret them. 1. The felicity of the righteous. *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour, and shall be grieved:* It will vex them to see their inno- cency cleared, and their low estate regarded; and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought and hoped to see, the favourites of heaven, and advanced to have dominion over them, Psalm xlix. 14. this will make them *gnash with their teeth, and pine away.* This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the rottenness of their bones. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth*, to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: to see all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. 2. Their own disappointment: *The desire of the wicked shall perish:* their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

P S A L M CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. 1. We are here called upon and urged to praise God, ver. 1-3. 2. We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths; in signing which we must with holy fear and love, give to God the glory of, (1.) The elevations of his glory and greatness, ver. 4, 5. (2.) The condescension of his grace and goodness, ver. 6. -9. which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise ye the name of the LORD. 2. Blessed be the name of the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore. 3. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD's name is to be praised. 4. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high? 6. Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth? 7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: 8. That he may set him with princes even with the princes of his people. 9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm, -

1. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name: the invitation is very pressing, *Praise ye the Lord*, and again, *Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name*, for it is to be praised, ver. 1, 2, 3. This intimates, (1.) That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. (2.) That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and greatly enlarged. (3.) That it is work we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. (4.) That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in, there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough: and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

Observe, 1. From whom God hath praise; from his own people, they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call, *Praise O ye servants of the Lord.* They have most reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants, know him best and receive most of his favours, and it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their master, and do him what honour they can: if they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all christians are a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him that has called them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord, who though they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

2. From whom he ought to have praise:

1. From all ages, ver. 2. *From this time forth for ever more*, let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying with the psalmist, *Blessed be his name now and always.*

2. From all places: *From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same*, i. e. throughout the habitable world; let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun-rising, (and those that do so much count upon it that he will set) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised, i. e. it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from East to West, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be blessed for ever, when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven; so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God, Mal. i. 11. then from

the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised, by some in all countries.

2. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, ver. 4, 5. We are in our praises to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high. (1.) High above all nations, their kings though never so pompous; their people though never so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is *major Angulis*, he is *minor universis*, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; and they are before him as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15-17. Let all the nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. (2.) High above the heavens; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, Lum. iii. 41. His glory is above the heavens, i. e. above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his; above what they do, for they are under his command and do his pleasure; and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say with an holy admiration. *Who is like unto the Lord our God*, Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendantly, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he dwelleth on high, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise, *He is a God who exalteth himself to dwell, who humbleth himself in heaven, and in earth.* Some think there is a transposition, *He exalteth himself to dwell in heaven, he humbleth himself to behold on earth*, but the sense is plain enough as we take it: only observe, God is said to exalt himself, and to humble himself, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour, and the spring of his own grace, God's condescending goodness appears,

1. In the cognizance he takes of the world below him; his glory is above the nations, and above the heavens, and yet neither are neglected by him; God is great, yet he despiseth not any, Job xxvi. 5. *He humbleth himself to behold all his creatures*, all his subjects, though he be infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency and felicity of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 35. even in this dominion he humbleth himself. (1.) It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. (2.) Much more is it condescension in him to behold the things that are in the earth, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and over-rule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice, and concerning ourselves about our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold the things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself.

2. In the particular favour he sometimes shews to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lesser lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor doth he only behold them, but does wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes; which shews that the world is governed not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

1. Those that have been long despicable are sometimes on a sudden made honourable, ver. 7, 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes.* (1.) Thus God doth sometimes magnify himself and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty; when he hath some great work to do, he chooseth to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles from fishing sent to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. (2.) Thus God doth sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people that have long groaned under the burden of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested, he was raised from the prison dust and set with princes. They that are wise will observe such returns of providence, and will understand by them the loving kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption of Jesus Christ, and not unfitly, for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it to the resurrection of the dead) nay, out of the dunghill of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purpose, 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7, 8.

2. Those that have been long barren are sometimes on a sudden made fruitful, ver. 9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their reproach. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house*, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she look well to the ways of her household, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a joyful mother of children, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, for joy that a man-child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, as Luke i. 14. and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving: *Praise ye the Lord.* Yet in this case rejoice with trembling; for though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her, or imbittered to her. This therefore may be applied to the gospel church among the Gentiles; the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, Isa. liv. 11. *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear*, Gal. iv. 27. for which we, that being sinners of the Gentiles are children of the desolate, have reason to say, *Praise ye the Lord.*

P S A L M CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, gave birth to their church and nation, which were then founded, then formed; that work of wonder ought therefore to be had in everlasting remembrance: God gloried in it in the preface to the ten commandments, and Hof. xi. 1. Out of Egypt have I called my son. In this psalm it is celebrated in lively streams of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great hallelujah, or song of praise which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover supper. It must never be forgotten, 1. That they were brought out of slavery, ver. 1. 2. That God set up his tabernacle among them, ver. 2. 3. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, ver. 3—5. 4. That the earth shook at the giving the law when God came down on mount Sinai, ver. 4—6—7. 5. That God gave them water out of the rock, ver. 8. In singing this Psalm we must acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust to God in the greatest straits.

1 WHEN Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; 2. Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. 3. The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back. 4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. 5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? 6. Ye mountains that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills like lambs? 7. Tremble thou earth at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob. 8. Which turned the rock into standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of, Judg. vi. 13. for time, as it doth not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy.

Let it never be forgotten.

1. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched out arm. *Israel went out of Egypt*, ver. 1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour: they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a people of strange language, Psal. lxxxi. 5. The Israelites it seems preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors, by which distinction from them they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

2. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution, ver. 2. *Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion*, i. e. When he delivered them out of the hands of their oppressors, it was that they might serve him, both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship, and in obedience to the moral law in their whole conversation. *Let my people go that they may serve me*. In order to this, (1.) He set up his sanctuary among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them, and promised to receive their homage and tribute. Happy the people that have God's sanctuary among them (see Exod. xxv. 8. Ezek. xxvii. 26) much more they that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, on whom *Holiness to the Lord* is written. (2.) He set up his dominion among them, was himself their Lawgiver and their Judge; and their government was a theocracy, *The Lord was their King*. All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion; those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ hath redeemed us that he might bring us unto God's service, and engage us for ever in it.

3. That the Red sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue, and the ruin of their enemies. And the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies, ver. 3. *The sea saw it*, saw there that Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion; and therefore fled; for nothing could have been more awful. This was it that drove Jordan back, and was an invincible dam to its streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them; they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the word. To illustrate this, the psalmist asks in a poetical strain, ver. 5. *What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?* and furnishesth the sea with an answer ver. 7. it was at the presence of the Lord. This is designed to express, 1. The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was at the presence of the Lord, who gave the word. 2. The mercy of the miracle; *What ailed thee?* was it in a frolick? was it only to amuse men? No, it was at the presence of the God of Jacob; it was in kindness to the Israel of God; for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, Hab. iii. 8—13. Isa. li. 10. lxiii. 11, &c. 3. The wonder and surprise of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with, to serve a turn for God's Israel? Well may the dukes of Edom be amazed, and the mighty men of Moab tremble, Exod. xv. 15. 4. The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea, and Jordan is unable to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan so deep, so broad, but when God's time is come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back if it stand in their way. Apply this, (1.) To the planting of the Christian church in the world; what ailed Satan and the powers of darkness to tremble and truckle as they did? Mark i. 34. ver. 7. What ailed the heathen oracles that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel to give up their cause, to hide their guilty heads, and call to rocks and mountains for shelter? Rev. vi. 15. It was at the presence of the Lord, and that power which went along with the gospel. (2.) To the work of grace in the heart; what turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ail the lusts and corruptions that they fly back? that the prejudices are removed, and the whole man become new? It is at the presence of God's spirit that imaginations are cast down, 2 Cor. x. 5.

4. That the earth shook and trembled when God came down on mount Sinai to give the law, ver. 4. *The mountains skipped like rams*, and then the little hills might well be excused if they skipped like lambs either when

they are frightened, or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters, and made them stand still, shook the stable mountains, and made them tremble; for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are before God but like rams and lambs, even the bulkiest and the most rocky are as manageable by him as they are by the shepherd. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills what ailed them to skip thus? and answers for them as for the seas, it was at the presence of the Lord, before whom, not only those mountains, but the earth itself may well tremble, ver. 7. Since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See Psalm civ. 32. Isa. lxiv. 3, 4. He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus, can, when he pleaseth, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies, and make them tremble.

5. That God supplied them with water out of the rocks, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth and all the inhabitants tremble before that God who turned the rock into a standing water, ver. 8. and what cannot he do who did that? The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel; Exod. xiv. 22. turned the rock into water to be a well to Israel; as they were protected, so they were provided for by miracle, standing miracles, for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4. For he is a fountain of living water to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

P S A L M CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is in the Hebrew a distinct psalm. In it we are taught to give glory, 1. To God, and not to ourselves, ver. 1. 2. To God, and not to idols, ver. 2—8. We must give glory to God, (1.) By trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, ver. 9—15. (2.) By blessing him, ver. 16—18. Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in, when the enemies were insolent and threatening, in which case the church doth not so much pour out her complaint to God, as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such an holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

1 NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, and for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. 2. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? 3. But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. 4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not. 6. They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not. 7. They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. 8. They that make them are like unto them so is every one that trusteth in them.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self, and the reproaches of idolaters.

1. Boasting is here for ever excluded, ver. 1. Let no opinion of our own merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory. (1.) Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? we must not assume the glory of it to ourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God; We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his mere mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise. Say not, *The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*, Deut. viii. 17. Say not, *For my righteousness the Lord has done these great and kind things for me*, Deut. ix. 4. No, all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, *Not unto us, O Lord*, and again, *not unto us, but to thy name* let all the glory be given; for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy, and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy and fulfil his promise. All our crowns must be cast at the feet of him that sits upon the throne, for that is the proper place for them. (2.) Are we in pursuit of any mercy, and wrestling with God for it? we must take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. Lord, do so and so for us, not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it. This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest; *Hallowed be thy name*, and in order to that, *Give us our daily bread*, &c. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the latter of them; whatever becomes of us, *unto thy name give glory*. See John xii. 27, 28.

2. The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced, and justly retorted.

(1.) The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen, ver. 2. *Wherefore should they say, where is now thy God?* i. e. 1. Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his providence; and always nigh to us by his promise and grace? 2. Why doth God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low, that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thine own name.

(2.) He gives a direct answer to their question, ver. 3. Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is: In the upper world is the presence of his glory; *Our God is in the heavens*, where the gods of the heathen never were; in the heavens, and therefore out of sight; but though his majesty be unapproachable, it doth not therefore follow that his being is questionable. 2. In the lower world are the products of his power; *He hath done whatsoever he pleased*, according to the counsel of his will: he hath a sovereign dominion, and an universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, and not far from any of us.

3. He returns their questions upon themselves. They asked where is the God of Israel, because he is not seen. He doth in effect ask, what are the gods of the heathen, because they are seen.

(1.) Ha

(1.) He shews that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters at first worshipped the sun and moon, *Job. xxii. 16.* which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to, (for evil men grow worse and worse) which was the worshipping of images, *ver. 4.* The matter of them was silver and gold, digged out of the earth, (man found them poor and dirty in a mine, *Herbert*;) proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of mens' vain imaginations, and the works of mens' hands, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hand, as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made in the image of God, it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of mens' hands; or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irresistible; *The workman made it, and therefore it is not God, Hos. viii. 6.* These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing; fitter for a toy-shop than a temple: for children to play with than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary did their part well enough: they made them with mouths, and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet, but they could put no life in them, and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcass, for that had life in it once, than a dead image, which neither has life nor can have. *They speak not, in answer to those that consult them, the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was no voice, neither any that answered. They see not the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burdens and wants. They hear not their prayers, though never so loud; they smell not their incense, though never so strong, never so sweet; they handle not the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot stretch forth their hands to the needy. They walk not, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as breathe through their throat; they have not the least sign or symptoms of life, but are as dead things after the priest has pretended to consecrate them, and call a deity into them, as they were before.*

(2.) He thence infers the foolishness of their worshippers, *ver. 8.* *They that make them images shew their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but they that make them gods shew their stupidity and folly; and are like unto them, as senseless blockish things; they see not the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; they hear not the voice of the day and night, which in every speech and language declares his glory, Psal. xix. 2, 3.* By worshipping these foolish puppets they make themselves more and more foolish like them, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, seeking themselves deeper into the mire of sense: and withal they provoke God to give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment, *Rom. i. 28.* *They that trust in them act very absurdly and very unreasonable; are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they to their cost, when theirs are gone, Jer. x. 3—11. Isa. xlii. 9, &c.*

9. O Israel trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield: 10. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 11. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 12. The LORD hath been mindful of us, he will bless us, he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. 13. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. 14. The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15. Ye are blessed of the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 16. The heaven, even the heavens are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17. The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18. But we will bless the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

In these verses,

1. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathens insulting over us, upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a help and a shield to those that do trust in him; a help to furnish them with and for ward them in that which is good, and a shield to fortify them against and protect them from every thing that is evil. Therefore, (1.) Let Israel trust in the Lord, the body of the people, as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concern, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best, and will be their help and shield. (2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the house of Aaron, trust in the Lord, *ver. 10.* they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies, and therefore of them God has particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him in the worst of times. (3.) Let the profelytes that are not of the seed of Israel; but fear the Lord, that worship him, and make conscience of their duty to him, let them trust in him, for he will not fail nor forsake them, *ver. 11.* Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God there may be a cheerful faith in him; they that reverence his word may rely upon it.

2. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God, and good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider,

(1.) What we have experienced, *ver. 12.* *The Lord has been mindful of us, and never unmindful; hath been so constantly, has been so remarkably upon special occasions. He hath been mindful of our case, our wants and burdens; mindful of our prayers to him and his promises to us, and the covenant-relation between him and us. All our comforts must be attributed to this God's thoughts to us-ward; he hath been mindful of us, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful.*

(2.) What we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer, he will bless us; he that has been our help and our shield, will be so; that has remembered us in our low estate, will not forget us; for he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promises inviolable; so that we have reason to hope he that hath delivered and doth, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all; he will bless us, i. e. he hath promised that he will; he hath pronounced a blessing upon all his people; God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesteth are

blest indeed. It is particularly promised that he will bless the house of Israel, i. e. he will bless the commonwealth, will bless his people, their civil, secular interests; he will bless the house of Aaron; i. e. the church, the ministry; will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people, it was their office, *Numb. vi. 23.* but God blest them, and so blest their blessings. *Nay, ver. 13. he will bless them that fear the Lord,* though they be not of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth before Peter perceived it, *that in every nation, he that fears God, is accepted of him, and blest, Acts x. 34, 35.* He will bless them both small and great, i. e. both young and old; God has blessings in store for them that are good belimes, and for them that are old disciples; both those that are poor in the world, and those that make a figure; the greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to all the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blest of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock.

It is promised, *ver. 14. The Lord shall increase you.* Whom God blesteth he increaseth; that was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings. *Be fruitful and multiply.* God's blessing gives an increase; increase in number, building up the family, increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour; especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increasings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom of grace, holiness and joy; those are blest indeed whom God thus increaseth, who are made wiser and better and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be, 1. A constant continual increase: *He shall increase you more and more;* so that as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light, *Prov. iv. 18.* 1. An hereditary increase; *You and your children;* you in your children; it is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God, even in their infancy. *For, ver. 15. You are blest of the Lord, you and your children are so; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blest,* *Isa. lxi. 9.* They that are blest of the Lord, have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord, as their help, and shield, for it is he that made heaven and earth; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he hath all things at command for us, if we fear him and trust in him. He that made heaven and earth, can doubtless make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

3. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist's example, who concludes the psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

(1.) God is to be praised, *ver. 16.* He is greatly to be praised: for, 1. His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he hath prepared in the heavens: *The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's;* he is the rightful owner of all the treasures of light and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. 2. His goodness is large, *for the earth he hath given unto the children of men,* having designed it when he made it for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is proprietor in chief; *the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;* but he has let out that vineyard to those unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services; for though he hath given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to an account how they use it. Calvin complains that profane and wicked people in his days perverted this scripture and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing in banter, that God having given the earth to the children of men, he will no more look after it, nor after them, upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make their best of it as their portion; and as if it were thrown like a prey among them, catch as catch can. It is pity such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as ariseth from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused: From the highest heavens it is certain God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth, but to the children of God heaven is given.

(2.) The dead are not capable of praising him, *ver. 17.* *nor any that go into silence.* The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body, and is capable of praising God; and the souls of the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, do praise God: are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant battles; but the dead body cannot praise God, death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field: the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies: Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols. *The dead praise not the Lord,* so as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life. See *Psal. xxx. 9—xxviii. 9.*

(3.) Therefore it concerns us to praise him, *ver. 12.* *But we that are alive, will bless the Lord,* we and those that shall come after us will do it, *from this time forth and for evermore,* to the end of time; we and those we shall remove to, *from this time forth, and to eternity. The dead praise not the Lord,* therefore we will do it the more diligently. 1. Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore Joshua arise.* 2. We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence; but while we do live, we will bless the Lord, will improve our time, and work the work of him that sent us into the world to praise him, before the time comes, and because the night comes when no man can work. *The Lord will bless us,* *ver. 12.* he will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him: Poor returns for rich receivings! Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it: *Praise the Lord: praise him with us, praise him in your places, as we in ours: praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. Hallelujah.*

P S A L M CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion, or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles and seven, from which he takes rise for many very lively expressions of devotion, love and gratitude; and with the like pious affection, our souls should be lifted up to God in singing it. Observe, 1. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, *ver. 3—10, 11.* 2. The application he made to God in that distress, *ver. 4.* 3. The experience he had of God's goodness to him in answer to prayer; God heard him, *ver. 1.* 2. pitied him, *ver. 5, 6.* delivered him, *ver. 8.* 4. His care what acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, *ver. 12.* (1.) *He will love God,* *ver. 1.* (2.) *He will continue to call upon him,* *ver. 2—13—17.* (3.) *He will rest in him,* *ver. 7.* (4.) *He will walk before him,* *ver. 9.* (5.) *He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own*

the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly, ver. 13-15, and ver. 17-19. Lastly, he will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, ver. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

1. **I LOVE** the LORD, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. 2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the gates of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful. 6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm we have,

1. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions, ver. 1, 2, which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.

(1.) He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer: *He hath heard my voice, and my supplications.* David in straits had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, i. e. had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his cause, and granted him an answer of peace. *He hath inclined his ear to me;* this intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear as it were to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in groanings that cannot be uttered. He *hearkens and hears*, Jer. viii. 6. yet it implies also that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him!

(2.) He resolved in consideration thereof to devote himself entirely to God, and to his honour.

1. He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly with a profession of that which his heart was full of; *I love the Lord;* as Psalm xviii. 1. and fitly doth he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment, and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him: God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him.

2. He will love prayer the better; *therefore I will call upon him.* The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our praying infirmities, and therefore why may we not? God therefore answers prayer to make us love it, and expects this from us in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field, when we have been so well treated in this? *Nay, I will call upon him as long as I live;* Hebrew, *In my days,* every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living we must continue praying: this breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

2. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him, and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God in his dealings with him shewed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record, ver. 5. *Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.* He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me. Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No. *Our God is merciful, merciful to us, and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.* Review David's experiences.

(1.) He was in great distress and trouble, ver. 3. *The sorrows of death compassed me,* i. e. such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death; perhaps here is the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, called here *the pains of hell;* terror of conscience, arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains: Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These compassed him on every side, they arrested him; *gat hold upon him,* so that he could not escape; *without were fightings; within were fears.* I found trouble and sorrow: not only it found me, but I found it. Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, trouble which they create themselves, by indulging fancy and passion: this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men: When God's providence makes our condition bad, let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

(2.) In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, ver. 4. He tells us that he prayed: *Then called I upon the name of the Lord;* then when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a saviour for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose; *O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul,* i. e. save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul. Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, *O Lord, I beseech thee;* when we come to the throne of grace we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words, ver. 5. *Gracious is the Lord,* may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request, and encourage his faith and hope; *Lord, deliver my soul,* for thou art *gracious and merciful,* and that only I depend upon for relief.

(3.) God in answer to his prayer came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion preserveth the simple, ver. 6. Because they are simple, i. e. sincere and upright and without guile, therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world, *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity.* Though they are simple, i. e. weak and helpless, and that cannot shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design, yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him, and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those that by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

Let David speak his own experience.

1. God supported him under his troubles: *I was brought low,* was plunged into the depth of misery, and then *he helped me,* helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else despair had

failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was once of the simple ones that God preserved; the poor man who cried, and the Lord heard him, Psalm xxxiv. 6. Note, God's people are never brought so low, but that everlasting arms are under them, and they cannot sink who are sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift that God chooseth to help, Deut. xxxii. 26.

2. God saved him out of his troubles, ver. 8. *Thou hast delivered.* Which means either the preventing the distress he was ready to fall into, or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, (1.) His soul from death. Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive, and the mercy is the more sensible if we have been at death's door, and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction, and yet ordered to return; that a life so often forfeited and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. (2.) His eyes from tears, i. e. His heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causeth grief, or however from being swallowed up with over much sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looseth the mourners' sackcloth, and girdeth them with gladness, then he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. (3.) His feet from falling, from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy when our feet are almost gone, then to have God hold us by the right hand, Psal. lxxii. 2-23. So that though we enter into temptation we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, *thou hast delivered my feet from falling* into the grave when I had one foot there already.

3. David in his returns of gratitude to God, shewed himself a good man. God had done all this for him; and therefore,

1. He will live a life of delight in God, ver. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul,* i. e. (1.) Repose thyself and be easy, and do not put thyself into such a toss with distrustful disquieting fears, as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself; God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee. (2.) Repose thyself in God: Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only. God is the soul's rest; in him only it can dwell at ease; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He hath dealt bountifully with us, i. e. He hath provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy laden, Matt. xi. 28. Return to thy Noah, his name signifies rest, as the dove when she found no rest returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, than this, *Return to thy rest, O my soul.*

2. He will live a life of devotedness to God, ver. 9. *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,* i. e. in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note, 1. It is our great duty to walk before the Lord, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence, and under his eye; to approve ourselves to him as a holy God, by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will; and as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him: *I am the almighty God, walk before me,* Gen. xvi. 1. *We must walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasings.* 2. The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The land of the living is a land of mercy which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity which we should improve. Canaan is called the land of the living, Ezek. xxxi. 20. and they whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision are in a special manner concerned to *set the Lord always before them.* If God had delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. 11. I said in my haste, All men are liars. 12. What shall I render unto the LORD, for all his benefits towards me? 13. I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people. 15. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. 16. O LORD, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bond. 17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now in the presence of all his people: 19. In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the *Martyr's psalm*, I suppose for the sake of ver. 15.

Three things here David makes confession of:

1. His faith, ver. 10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Which is quoted by the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 13. with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel, that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this, and therefore he spoke, spoke to God by prayer, ver. 4. by praise, ver. 12. Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself; because he believed, he said to his soul, *Return to thy rest.* He spoke to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him, and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, They that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, Rom. x. 10. Acts ix. 19, 20. They that live in hope of the kingdom of glory, must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, Matt. x. 32.

1. His fear, ver. 11. *I was greatly afflicted,* and then *I said in my haste,* somewhat rashly and inconsiderately, in my amazement, so some; when I was in a consternation; in a flight, so others; when Saul was in pursuit of me, all men are liars; all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers;

tiers: his friends, who he thought would have stood by him, deserted him and disowned him when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him: for, *saith he, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. Observe, 1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David *believed and spoke well*, ver. 10. but now through unbelief he spoke amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3*. 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man who *sits in the seat of the scornful*, *Psal. i. 1*. sits and *speaks against his brother*, *Psal. i. 19, 20*. 4. What we speak amiss in haste we must by repentance unsay again; as David, *Psal. xxxi. 22*. and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no ill word of David's. He was *greatly afflicted* and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No, he said, *All men are liars*; as men of low degree are vanity, so men of a high degree are a lie, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed. And in this sense the apostle seems to take it. *Rom. iii. 4*. *Let God be true and every man a liar*, in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man, and cleave to God.

3. His gratitude, *ver. 12, &c.* God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and in consideration hereof,

1. He inquires what returns he shall make, *ver. 12*. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* Here he speaks, (1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God, *all his benefits*. This psalm seems to have been peened upon occasion of some one particular benefit, *ver. 6, 7*. but in that one he saw many, and that one brought many to mind, and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note. When we speak of God's mercies we should magnify them, and speak highly of them. (2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude, *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompense to God, than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, *What shall I render?* asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather asks himself, and communes with his own heart, about it. Note. Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to inquire, *What we shall render?*

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

1. He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, *ver. 13-17*.

(1.) *I will take the cup of salvation*, i. e. I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me; this is called *the cup of deliverance*, because drank in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a *cup of blessing* at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table pledged him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but the cup God would put into his hand. *I will receive*, 1. *The cup of affliction*: many good interpreters understood it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a *cup of salvation*. *Phil. i. 19*. *This shall turn to my salvation*; it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we in ours have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a *cup of salvation*. God having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it, welcome his holy will. Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David, *John xviii. 11*. *The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not take it, and drink it?* 2. *The cup of consolation*: I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this.

(2.) *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving*: the thank offerings which God required. *Lev. vii. 11, 12, &c.* Note. Those whose hearts are truly thankful will express it in thank-offerings. We must first give our ourselves to God as *living sacrifices*, *Rom. xii. 1*. 2 Cor. viii. 5. and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity: *doing good and communicating are sacrifices with which God is well pleased*, *Heb. xiii. 15, 16*. and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return is to be bountiful to the poor, *Psal. xvi. 2, 3*. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing?

(2.) *I will call upon the name of the Lord*: This he had promised, *ver. 2*. and here he repeats it, *ver. 13*. and again, *ver. 17*. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him we hope we shall never trouble him again, but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him and a delight and no trouble; and therefore in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for farther mercies, and continue to call upon him.

2. He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people, *ver. 15*. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, so precious that he will not gratify Saul or Absalom, or any of David's enemies with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it, that might be in the like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; they have received mercy from him, and shew mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour it all they can, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them: but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord*, i. e. their life is so, 2 Kings i. 12. their blood is so, *Psal. lxxii. 14*. God oftentimes wonderfully prevents the death of his saints, when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dear for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, *Matt. xxiii. 35*. *Though no man lays it to heart when the righteous perish*, God will make to appear that he *lays it to heart*. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

3. He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days: Having asked, *What shall I render?* here he surrenders himself, which was more than all the burnt-offerings and sacrifices, *ver. 16*. *O Lord, truly I am thy servant*. Here is, 1. The relation to which David professeth to stand to God; *I am thy servant*, i. e. I choose to be so, I resolve to be so, I will

live and die in thy service. He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints*; but when he comes to apply it to himself he doth not say, *Truly I am thy saint*, that looked too high a title to himself, but *I am thy servant*, David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest kings on earth to be the servants of the God of heaven. David doth not here compliment with God, as it is common among men to say, *I am your servant*, Sir; No, Lord, I am *truly thy servant*, *thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so*. And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of, and which he was resolved to abide by: *I am thy servant, I am thy servant*. Let others serve what master they will, *truly I am thy servant*. 2. The ground of that relation; two ways men came to be servants: (1.) By birth: Lord, I was born in thy house, *I am the son of thy handmaid*, and therefore thine. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obligeth us to duty, and is pleasurable with God for mercy. (2.) By redemption: He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant: *Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds*, those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore *I am thy servant*, and intitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work. *The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee*. Patrick.

4. He will make conscience of paying his vows, and making good what he had promised: not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction, *ver. 14*. *I will pay him my vows*: and again, *ver. 18*. *now in the presence of all his people*. Note. Vows are debts that must be paid; for it is better not vow, than vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, 1. *Presently*, he will not like sorry debtors delay the payment of them, or beg a day, but I will pay them now, *Eccles. v. 4*. 2. *Publicly*; he will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do it in the presence of all his people; not for ostentation, but to shew that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, in the midst of Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

P S A L M CXVII

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so often as we do is for the shortness of it; but if we rightly understood and considered it, we would sing it oftener for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, 1. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, *ver. 1*. 2. Proper matter for that praise suggested, *ver. 2*. *We are soon weary indeed of well doing, if in singing this psalm we keep no up these pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning*.

1. O Praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him all ye people. 2. For his merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it, *Rom. xv. 11*. where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, *Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye people*. Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses, to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people; by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

1. The vast extent of the gospel church, *ver. 1*. For many ages in Judah only was God known and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations *praised gods of wood and stone*, *Dan. v. 4*. while there was no devotion at all paid, at least none openly that we know of, to the living and true God. But here *all nations* are called upon to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood; and because unless the people of the land became Jews and were circumcised, they were not permitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were *afar off* are *made nigh*. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but at length revealed in the accomplishment, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, *Eph. iii. 3-6*. Observe here,

(1.) Who should be admitted into the church: *All nations, and all people*. The original words are the same that are used for the *heathen that rage* and the *people that imagine* against Christ, *Psal. ii. 1*. they that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, *Matth. xxiv. 14*. *Mark xvi. 15*. *All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be disciples*.

(2.) How their admission into the church is foretold by a repeated call to praise him. The tidings of the gospel being sent to all nations should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God, and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites by his word and inclines by his Spirit to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise. See *Rev. vii. 9, 10*.

2. The unspeakable riches of gospel grace, which are to be the matter of our praise, *ver. 2*. In the gospel those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most bright in themselves, and most comfortable to us: and the apostle where he quotes this psalm takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God, *Rom. xv. 8, 9*. *for the truth of God, and for his mercy*. We that enjoy the gospel have reason to praise the Lord, 1. For the power of his mercy; *His merciful kindness is great towards us*: it is strong, so the word signifies: it is mighty for the pardon of mighty sins, *Amo. v. 12*. and for the working out of a mighty salvation. 2. For the perpetuity of his truth; *The truth of the Lord endureth for ever*. It was mercy, mere mercy to the Gentiles that the gospel was sent among them; it was merciful kindness prevailing towards them above their deserts and in it the truth of the Lord, of his promise made unto the fathers *endureth for ever*: for though the Jews were hardened and expelled

expelled yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hopes; and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

P S A L M CXVIII.

It is probable David penned this psalm when he had after many a storm weathered this point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical: to him it is certain the prophet here bears witness in the latter part of the psalm; Christ himself applies it to himself, Matt. xxi. 42. and the former part of the psalm may fairly and without forcing be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it, 1. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, ver. 1-4. 2. He encourageth himself and others to trust in God from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him, ver. 5-18. 3. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, ver. 19-23. 4. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, ver. 24-29. In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let Israel now say that his mercy endureth for ever. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say; that his mercy endureth for ever. 4. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5. I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. 6. The LORD is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7. The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. 8. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man. 9. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in princes. 10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11. They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13. Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. 14. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 16. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 17. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18. The LORD has chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness, the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience.

In these verses,

1. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it from their own experience of it, ver. 1. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endureth for ever*, not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be for ever monuments of it. Israel and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God were called upon to trust in God, Psal. cxv. 9, 10, 11. here they are called upon to confess that his mercy endures for ever, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, ver. 2, 3, 4. priests, and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song: if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that his mercy endures for ever, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

2. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might from thence fetch both songs of praises and supports of faith, and both ways God would have glory. David had in his time waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who when they are lifted up care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions, but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was in distress, ver. 5. greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that hated him, ver. 7. and that cannot but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strives to gain the good affections of all. *All nations compassed me about*; ver. 10. all the neighbouring nations to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David when he was newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. we read of his enemies round about, they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated, ver. 11. *They compassed me about, yea, they*

compassed me about, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and for a time prevalent in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder rallied again, and pushed on their design, *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings, but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loseth her life with the sting, *Animusque in vulnere ponit*. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me.

Two ways David was brought into trouble, 1. By the injuries that men did him, ver. 13. *Thou (O enemy) hast thrust sore at me*, with many a desperate push, that I might fall into sin and into ruin: *Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me* (so the word is) so that I was ready to fall. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sore at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency that we may fall from our God, and from our comfort in him; and if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts had been fatal to us. 2. By the afflictions which God laid upon him, ver. 18. *The Lord hath chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chasteneth him with the love and tenderness of a father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he might partake of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10, 11: howbeit, men that were the instruments of it meant not so, neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy; Isa. x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief, God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand: God will sanctify the trouble to his people as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs, and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus: many there were that hated him, hated him without a cause, they compassed him about, Jews and Romans surrounded him; they thrust sore at him; the devil did so when he tempted him, his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sore, bruised him and put him to grief, that by his stripes we might be healed.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. (1.) God heard his prayer, ver. 5. *He answered me* with enlargements, he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer, and yet gave more largely than I desired. *He answered me, and set me in a large place* (so we read it) where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive: and the large place was the more comfortable, because he was brought to it out of distress, Psal. lv. 1.

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him: they are quenched as the fire of thorns, ver. 12. which burns furiously, for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened; such was the fury of David's enemies: such is the laughter of the fool, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccles. vii. 6. and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, no more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sore at him, but the Lord helped him, ver. 13. helped him to keep his feet and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long before this been our ruin if God had not been our helper.

(3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death, ver. 18. He hath chastened me, but he has not given me over unto death, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies. To this St. Paul seems to refer, 2 Cor. vi. 9. *as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sore, presently to despair of life, for God sometimes in appearance turns men to destruction, and yet saith, *Return; saith unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ; God answered him and set him in a large place, quenched the fire of his enemies rage, which did but consume themselves, for through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, he helped him through his undertaking, and thus far he did not give him over unto death, that he did not leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, *It is better*, more wise and more comfortable and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man, yea, though it be in princes, ver. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's conduct and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him easy, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

1. He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him, ver. 6. *The Lord is on my side*. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouseth my righteous cause, and will plead it. If we are on God's side, he is on ours: if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us, ver. 7. *The Lord taketh my part, and stands up for me, with them that help me*. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them; that he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself, nor could any friend I have in the world help me. Thus ver. 14. *The Lord is my strength, and my song*, i. e. I make him so; without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering; and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief; and making him so, I find him so: he doth strengthen my heart with his graces, and rejoice my heart with his comforts. If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our work in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our strength and our song, he is become not only our saviour but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

2. He triumphs over his enemies; now shall his head be lifted up above them; for,

(1.) He is sure they cannot hurt him; God is for me, and then I will not fear what man can do against me, ver. 6. he can set them all at defiance, and not be disturbed at any of their attempts. They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do: they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God, they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa. li. 12.* The apostle quotes this with application to all Christians, Heb. xiii. 6. they may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; let him do his worst.

(2.) He is sure he shall be too hard for them at last: *I shall see my desire upon them that hate me*, ver. 7. i. e. I shall see them defeated in their designs against

against me: nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them*, ver. 10, 11, 12. i. e. I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them; and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself, or taking vengeance for myself. Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel*, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David faith this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly.

3. He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory and his life.

1. Of his comfort, ver. 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable: here we have no city, no continuing city. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnest of eternal salvation, which is come to this house, Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing there ought to be the voice of rejoicing, i. e. praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others.

(2.) Of his victory. *The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly*, ver. 15. and is exalted; for (as some read it) *it has exalted me*. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victoriously: For what d feebly can stand before the divine valour? We are weak and act but cowardly for ourselves: but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us with jealousy and affection. *Ipsa* lxiii. 5, 6. There is spirit as well as strength in all God's operations for his people. And when God's right hand doth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises.

(3.) Of his life, ver. 17. *I shall not die by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, but live and declare the works of the Lord*, i. e. I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me; and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation. Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose but to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as this were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.

19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: 20. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21. I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22. The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. 23. This is the LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. 24. This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice, and be glad in it. 25. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applied it to the faces of the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, *Acts* iv. 11. Now observe here,

1. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, ver. 19, 20, 21. (1.) The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that cometh in the name of the Lord. *Open to me the gates of righteousness*. So the temple gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh: as the sacrifices there offered are called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances, must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must go into them, must enter into the holiest as far as we have leave, and praise the Lord. Our business within God's gates is to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. (2.) He sees admission granted him, ver. 20. *This is the gate of the Lord*, the gate of his appointing, into which the righteous shall enter, q. d. the gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. *Knock and it shall be opened unto you*. Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted: he is the way, no coming to the Father but by him, *John* xiv. 6. he is the door of the sheep, *John* x. 9. he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only the righteous, and they only shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, *Psaln* lxxix. 27. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened.

(3.) He promiseth to give thanks to God for this favour, ver. 21. *I will praise thee*. They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

2. The prophecy itself, ver. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the headstone of the building: but its principal reference is to Christ and here we have,

(1.) His humiliation; he is the stone which the builders refused; he is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, *Dan* ii. 34. He is a stone, not only for strength and firmness and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone, 1 Pet. ii. 6. For the founda-

tion of the Gospel church must be sapphire, *Ipsa* liv. 11. This stone was rejected by the builders, i. e. by the rulers and people of *Jerusalem*, *Acts* iv. 8—10, 11. they refused to own him as the stone of the foundation; and they would not build their faith upon him, nor put themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their own way; they denied him in the presence of Pilate, *Acts* iii. 12. when they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. They trampled upon his cross, threw it out of the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stoned him. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that made light of him. Rejectors of Christ are rejected of God.

(2.) His exaltation; he is become the headstone of the corner, i. e. he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the preeminence as the author and finisher of our faith. Thus highly hath God exalted him, because he hath humbled himself; and we in compliance with God's design will make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. To me to live is Christ.

(3.) The hand of God in all this. *This is the Lord's doing*, it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord: it is the product of his counsel, it is his contrivance, both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus was his work, *Acts* ii. 23—iv. 27, 28. He sent him, sealed him, his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did as Father's will; and this ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Canst's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness*.

3. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

(1.) Let the day be solemnised to the honour of God with great joy, ver. 21. *This is the day the Lord has made*. The whole time of the gospel dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted: and so, 1. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath; *It is the day which the Lord hath made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days: he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2. The duty of the sabbath; the work of the day that is to be done in his day, *we will rejoice and be glad in it*; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the head of the corner. This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven: See what a good Master we serve; who having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

(2.) Let the exalted Redeemer be met and attended with joyful hosannas, ver. 25, 26.

1. Let him have the acclamations of the people as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy; *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord*. This is like *Shema*, and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. *Hosanna* signifies, *Save now, I beseech thee*. (1.) Lord, I beseech thee; let this favour be my favour; and in order to that my ruler; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies: Lord, I beseech thee, take me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, *Psaln* lxxv. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering, and to conquer. (2.) Lord preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done; thus let prayer be made for him continually, *Psaln* lxxv. 15. On the Lord's day, whence we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well-wishers, *Matt* xxi. 9. *Hosannah to the Son of David*, long live king Jesus; let him reign for ever.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, ver. 26. (1.) Let them bless the prince with their praises; *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Jesus Christ is he that cometh; *ἐρχόμενος*, he that was to come, and is yet to come again, *Rev* i. 8. He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him to act for him, to do his will and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*, i. e. we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, *Psal* xlv. 2. We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thine own. Bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, *Ipsa* lii. 7. *John* xiii. 20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who hath said, *Surely I come quickly*, would even so come. (2.) Let them bless the people with their prayers: *we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord*: Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed to pronounce a blessing in his name upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, *Eph* vi. 24. We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you; you are blessed out of the house of the Lord, i. e. with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, *Eph* i. 3. and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you.

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, ver. 27. Here is, 1. The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ; *God is the Lord which hath shewed us light*; God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he hath promised, and perfecting what he hath begun, *Exod* vi. 3. *He hath shewed us light*, i. e. he hath given us the knowledge of himself and his will; he hath shined upon us, so some; hath favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he hath given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is the light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. *The day which the Lord hath made* brings light with it, true light. 2. The duty which this privilege calls for; *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that being killed the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere,)

elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, Rom. xii. 1. to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, ver. 28, 29. 1. He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him, and interest in him: *Thou art my God on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me, and therefore I will praise thee.* 2. He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord, and in him it is that God is good to man, and that his mercy endureth for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it, ver. 1. for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closeth a prophecy of Christ: the angels give thanks for man's redemption, *Glory to God in the highest*, Luke ii. 14. for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, *Luke xix. 31. Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore Glory in the highest.*

P S A L M CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates, that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and toward the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book, where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting, and for the expressing of our devout affections; and it is true what some have said of this psalm, He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him. 1. The composition of it is singular and very nice. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson saith, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our ABC. Perhaps, the penman found it of use to himself, to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with, might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them, both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse: Thus young people would the easier learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despiseth their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile. 2. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for which he praiseth God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are upon the matter synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, both that which tells us what God expects from us, and that which tells us what we may expect from him; and of the system of religion which is founded upon it and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him; as our sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built, are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is ver. 122.) in all this long psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence or David's practice, as ver. 75. 84. 121, and ver. 132. They are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day; which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul; so copious, so various is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our ruler and great benefactor; and that in

which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another; so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life; and to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every christian. Is any afflicted? is any merry? each will find that here that is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone, and when others join with us; for ordinarily the affections, especially of weaker christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

I. A L E P H.

1. **BLESSED** are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shews that godly people are happy people; they are and shall be blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he doth not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness.

Now observe the characters of the happy people.

1. They are happy that make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves in their whole conversation by that rule; they walk in the law of the Lord, ver. 1. i. e. God's word is a law to them; not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversations; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forward in them towards the mark, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is walking in God's ways, ver. 3. the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our talk, but we must make it the rule of our walk. Walk in his ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job xx ii. 10, 11. xxxi. 7.

2. That are upright and honest in their religion; *Undefiled in the way*; not only that keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, unspotted from the world, but that are habitually sincere in their intentions; in whose spirit there is no guile; who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way they look.

3. That are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that to them were committed the Oracles of God: and blessed are they who preserve pure and intire that sacred depositum: that keep his testimonies, as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye; so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those that shall come after them in this world. They that would walk in the law of the Lord, must keep his testimonies, i. e. his truth: those will not long make conscience of good practices, that do not adhere to good principles. Or, his testimonies, i. e. his covenant: the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony; those do not keep covenant with God, that do not keep the commandments of God.

4. That have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion, ver. 2. They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only: this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be the rewarder, the reward of all those that thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart; or that is it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. That carefully avoid all sin, ver. 3. They do no iniquity, i. e. they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do that are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it, they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways: Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law: The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at their liberty whether they would make the word of God their rule or no; that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is; He taught our first parents to question the command; *Hath God said, Ye shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this, ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, to make religion our rule, and to keep them diligently; to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so, ver. 5. O that my ways were directed accordingly! i. e. not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, as that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments; not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes; but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agrees with the will and command of a good God. Thou wouldst have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them. This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, ver. 6. Note, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good man, that he hath a respect to all God's commandments. He hath a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, and aims to conform to it;

it; is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he doth in religion doth it in conscience of the command, because it is his duty. He hath respect to all the commandments, one as well another, because they are all backed with the same authority, *Jam. ii. 10, 11.* and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those that have a sincere respect to any command, will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man; both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins; and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. 2. Those that have a sincere respect to all God's commandments, shall not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, *1 John iii. 21.* They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself; they that are upright, may take the comfort of their uprightness: as if I be wicked woe to me; so if I be sincere, it is well with me.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, 1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to have learned God's righteous judgments; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desiring to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained: but as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head scholars and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures.*

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: *I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments;* intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him: and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for: though Christ keeps a free-school, and teacheth without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his Word and for his Spirit: sure it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. And those have learned a great lesson that have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue: but those only are well learned in this mystery, that have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, i. e. are inward with him in praising of him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning. *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes.* We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes, that are come up to a full resolution in the strength of his grace to keep them.

3. His prayer to God not to leave him: *O forsake me not,* i. e. leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy spirit and grace from me, then *I shall not keep thy statutes.* Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them, for then the tempter will be too hard for them. Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost for a time withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly;* for woe unto me, if God departs from me.

2. B E T H.

9. Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked, by what means the next generation may be made better than this; *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day) there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way. *Youthful lusts,* *2 Tim. ii. 22.* these render the way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way, i. e. to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed: to make clean and keep clean, from the corruption that is in the world through lust, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves inquire, by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to the word of God, and it is the honour of the word of God, that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. 1. Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men, than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. 2. They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or chusing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture rules, so that their way be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from my commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God. *I have sought thee,* sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; *for should not a people seek unto their God?* If I have not yet found thee, *I have sought thee,* and thou never saidst, seek in vain, nor wilt

say of to me, for *I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart;* sought thee only, sought thee diligently.

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; thou hast inclined me to seek my precepts, never suffer me to wander from them. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; *he hid it in his heart,* laid it up there that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a dear love for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts: if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; *that I might not sin against thee.* Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it: and the most effectual way to prevent it, is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with *it is written;* may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements and his threatenings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: *Blessed art thou, O Lord.* Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

1. He asks grace from God. *Teach me thy statutes,* i. e. give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness. *Teach me thy statutes,* that I may know how to bless thee who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God, *ver. 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.* This he did not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment according to the word of God, not only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he shewed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's words from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, *things new and old.* They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, *ver. 12.* that God would teach him; and here he pleads, Lord I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it; for *to him that hath shall be given.*

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it. *Lord, teach me thy statutes;* for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them, *ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments,* i. e. in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that part of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches;* as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul take thine ease;* in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he doth, that he will do, *2 Cor. xi. 12.* they that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts, *ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts.* He not only discoursed of them to others, many do that only to shew their knowledge and authority, but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye. *I will have respect unto thy ways,* as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoiceth in this light, but *I will still, I will for ever delight myself in thy statutes;* not only think of them, but do them with delight, *ver. 16.* David took more delight in God's statutes, than in the pleasure of his court, or the honours of his camp: more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; *I will not forget thy word;* not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it. They that meditate in God's word and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. G I M E L.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with*

elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, Rom. xii. 1. to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, ver. 28, 29. 1. He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him, and interest in him: *Thou art my God on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me, and therefore I will praise thee.* 2. He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord, and in him it is that God is good to man, and that his mercy endureth for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it, ver. 1. for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closeth a prophecy of Christ: the angels give thanks for man's redemption, *Glory to God in the highest*, Luke ii. 14, for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, *Luke xix. 31. Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore Glory in the highest.*

PSALM CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates, that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and towards the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book, where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting, and for the expressing of our devout affections; and it is true what some have said of this psalm. He that shall read it conscientiously, it will either warm him or shame him. 1. The composition of it is singular and very nice. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson saith, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our ABC. Perhaps, the penman found it of use to himself, to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with, might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them, both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse: Thus young people would the easier learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despiseth their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile. 2. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for which he praiseth God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are upon the matter synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, both that which tells us what God expects from us, and that which tells us what we may expect from him; and of the system of religion which is founded upon it and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him; as our sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built, are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is ver. 122.) in all this long psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence or David's practice, as ver. 75. 84. 121. and ver. 132. They are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day; which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul; so copious, so various is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our ruler and great benefactor; and that in

which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another; so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life; and to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every christian. Is any afflicted? is any merry? each will find that here that is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone, and when others join with us; for ordinarily the affections, especially of weaker christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

1. A L E P H.

1. **B**LESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shews that godly people are happy people; they are and shall be blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he doth not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness.

Now observe the characters of the happy people.

1. They are happy that make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves in their whole conversation by that rule; they walk in the law of the Lord, ver. 1. i. e. God's word is a law to them; not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversations; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forward in them towards the mark, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is walking in God's ways, ver. 3. the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our talk, but we must make it the rule of our walk. Walk in his ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job xxii. 10, 11. xxxi. 7.

2. That are upright and honest in their religion; *Undefiled in the way*; not only that keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, unspotted from the world, but that are habitually sincere in their intentions; in whose spirit there is no guile; who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way they look.

3. That are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that to them were committed the Oracles of God; and blessed are they who preserve pure and intire that sacred depositum: that keep his testimonies, as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye; so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those that shall come after them in this world. They that would walk in the law of the Lord, must keep his testimonies, i. e. his truth: those will not long make conscience of good practices, that do not adhere to good principles. Or, his testimonies, i. e. his covenant: the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony; those do not keep covenant with God, that do not keep the commandments of God.

4. That have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion, ver. 2. They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only: this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be the rewarder, the reward of all those that thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart; or that is it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. That carefully avoid all sin, ver. 3. They do no iniquity, i. e. they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do that are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it, they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways: Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law: The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at their liberty whether they would make the word of God their rule or no; that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is; He taught our first parents to question the command; *Hath God said, Ye shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this, ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, to make religion our rule, and to keep them diligently; to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so, ver. 5. O that my ways were directed accordingly! i. e. not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, as that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments; not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes; but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agrees with the will and command of a good God. Thou wouldst have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I will keep them. This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, ver. 6. Note, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good man, that he hath a respect to all God's commandments. He hath a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, and aims to conform to it;

it; is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he doth in religion doth it in conscience of the command, because it is his duty. He hath respect to all the commandments, one as well another, because they are all backed with the same authority, *Jam. ii. 10, 11.* and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those that have a sincere respect to any command, will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man; both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins; and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. 2. Those that have a sincere respect to all God's commandments, shall not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, *1 John iii. 21.* They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself; they that are upright, may take the comfort of their uprightness: as if I be wicked woe to me; so if I be sincere, it is well with me.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, 1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to have learned God's righteous judgments; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desiring to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained: but as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head scholars and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures.*

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: *I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments;* intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him: and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for: though Christ keeps a free-school, and teacheth without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his Word and for his Spirit: sure it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. And those have learned a great lesson that have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue: but those only are well learned in this mystery, that have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, i. e. are inward with him in praising of him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning. *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes.* We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes, that are come up to a full resolution in the strength of his grace to keep them.

3. His prayer to God not to leave him: *O forsake me not,* i. e. leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy spirit and grace from me, then I shall not keep thy statutes. Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them, for then the tempter will be too hard for them. Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost for a time withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly;* for woe unto me, if God departs from me.

2. B E T H.

9. Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked, by what means the next generation may be made better than this; *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day) there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way. *Youthful lusts,* *2 Tim. ii. 22.* these render the way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way, i. e. to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed: to make clean and keep clean, from the corruption that is in the world through lust, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves inquire, by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to the word of God, and it is the honour of the word of God, that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. 1. Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men, than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. 2. They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or chusing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture rules, so that their way be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from my commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God. *I have sought thee,* sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; *for should not a people seek unto their God?* If I have not yet found thee, *I have sought thee,* and thou never saidst, seek in vain, nor wilt

say of to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart; sought thee only, sought thee diligently.

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; thou hast inclined me to seek my precepts, never suffer me to wander from them. The best we sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; he hid it in his heart, laid it up there that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a dear love for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts: if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; that I might not sin against thee. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it: and the most effectual way to prevent it, is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with *it is written;* may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements and his threatenings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: *Blessed art thou, O Lord.* Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

1. He asks grace from God. *Teach me thy statutes,* i. e. give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness. *Teach me thy statutes,* that I may know how to bless thee who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God, *ver. 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.* This he did not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment according to the word of God, not only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he shewed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's words from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, things new and old. They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, *ver. 12.* that God would teach him; and here he pleads, Lord I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it; for to him that hath shall be given.

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it. *Lord, teach me thy statutes;* for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them, *ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments,* i. e. in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that part of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches;* as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul take thine ease;* in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he doth, that he will do, *2 Cor. xi. 12.* they that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts, *ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts.* He not only discoursed of them to others, many do that only to shew their knowledge and authority, but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye. *I will have respect unto thy ways,* as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoiceth in this light, but *I will still, I will for ever delight myself in thy statutes;* not only think of them, but do them with delight, *ver. 16.* David took more delight in God's statutes, than in the pleasure of his court, or the honours of his camp: more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; *I will not forget thy word;* not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it. They that meditate in God's word and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. G I M E L.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully*

expelled yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hope; and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

P S A L M CXVIII.

It is probable David penned this psalm when he had after many a storm weathered this point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical: to him it is certain the prophet here bears witness in the latter part of the psalm; Christ himself applies it to himself, Matt. xxi. 42. and the former part of the psalm may fairly and without forcing be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it, 1. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, ver. 1-4. 2. He encourageth himself and others to trust in God from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him, ver. 5-18. 3. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, ver. 19-23. 4. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, ver. 24-29. In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

1. **O** Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2. Let Israel now say that his mercy endureth for ever. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say; that his mercy endureth for ever. 4. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5. I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. 6. The LORD is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7. The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. 8. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man. 9. It is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in princes. 10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11. They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13. Thou hast thrust fore at me, that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. 14. The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 16. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doth valiantly. 17. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18. The LORD has chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness, the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience.

In these verses,

1. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it from their own experience of it, ver. 1. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endureth for ever*, not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be for ever monuments of it. Israel and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God were called upon to trust in God, Psal. cxv. 9, 10, 11. here they are called upon to confess that his mercy endures for ever, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, ver. 2, 3, 4. priests, and people, Jews and profelytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song: if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that his mercy endures for ever, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

2. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might from thence fetch both songs of praises and supports of faith, and both ways God would have glory. David had in his time waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who when they are lifted up care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions, but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was in distress, ver. 5. greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that hated him, ver. 7. and that cannot but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strives to gain the good affections of all. All nations compassed me about; ver. 10. all the neighbours nations to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David when he was newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. we read of his enemies round about, they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated, ver. 11. *They compassed me about, yea, they*

compassed me about, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and for a time prevalent in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder rallied again, and pushed on their design, *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings, but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loseth her life with the sting, *Animusque in vulnere ponit*. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me.

Two ways David was brought into trouble, 1. By the injuries that men did him, ver. 13. *Thou (O enemy) hast thrust fore at me*, with many a desperate push, that I might fall into sin and into ruin: *Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me* (so the word is) so that I was ready to fall. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts fore at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency that we may fall from our God, and from our comfort in him; and if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts had been fatal to us. 2. By the afflictions which God laid upon him, ver. 18. *The Lord hath chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chasteneth him with the love and tenderness of a father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he might partake of his holiness, Heb. x. 10, 11. howbeit, men that were the instruments of it meant not so, neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy, Isa. x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief, God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand: God will sanctify the trouble to his people as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs, and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus: many there were that hated him, hated him without a cause; they compassed him about, Jews and Romans surrounded him; they thrust fore at him; the devil did so when he tempted him, his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sore, bruised him and put him to grief, that by his stripes we might be healed.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. (1.) God heard his prayer, ver. 5. *He answered me* with enlargements, he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer, and yet gave more largely than I desired. *He answered me, and set me in a large place* (so we read it) where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive: and the large place was the more comfortable, because he was brought to it out of distress, Psal. iv. 1.

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him: they are quenched as the fire of thorns, ver. 12. which burns furiously, for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened; such was the fury of David's enemies: such is the laughter of the fool, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccles. vii. 6. and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, no more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust fore at him, but the Lord helped him, ver. 13. helped him to keep his feet and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long before this been our ruin if God had not been our helper.

(3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death, ver. 18. *He hath chastened me*, but he has not given me over unto death, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies. To this St. Paul seems to refer, 2 Cor. vi. 9. *as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sore, presently to despair of life, for God sometimes in appearance turns men to destruction, and yet saith, *Return; saith unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ; God answered him and set him in a large place, quenched the fire of his enemies' rage, which did but consume themselves, for through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, he helped him through his undertaking, and thus far he did not give him over unto death, that he did not leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, *It is better*, more wise and more comfortable and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man, yea, though it be in princes, ver. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's conduct and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him safe, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

1. He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him, ver. 6. *The Lord is on my side*. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouseth my righteous cause, and will plead it. If we are on God's side, he is on ours: if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us, ver. 7. *The Lord taketh my part*, and stands up for me, with them that help me. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them; that he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself, nor could any friend I have in the world help me. Thus ver. 14. *The Lord is my strength, and my song*, i. e. I make him so; without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering; and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief; and making him so, I find him so: he doth strengthen my heart with his graces, and rejoice my heart with his comforts. If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our work in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our strength and our song, he is become not only our favour but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

2. He triumphs over his enemies; now shall his head be lifted up above them; for,

(1.) He is sure they cannot hurt him; God is for me, and then I will not fear what man can do against me, ver. 6. he can set them all at defiance, and not be disturbed at any of their attempts. They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do: they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God, they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Isa. li. 12. The apostle quotes this with application to all Christians, Heb. xiii. 6. they may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; let him do his worst.

(2.) He is sure he shall be too hard for them at last: *I shall see my desire upon them that hate me*, ver. 7. i. e. I shall see them defeated in their designs against

against me: nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them*, ver. 10, 11, 12. *i. e.* I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them; and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by war- rant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself, or taking vengeance for myself. Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel*, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David faith this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly.

3. He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory and his life.

1. Of his comfort, ver. 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable: here we have no city, no continuing city. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnest of eternal salvation, which is come to this house, Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing there ought to be the voice of rejoicing, *i. e.* praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others.

(2.) Of his victory. *The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly*, ver. 15, and is exalted; for (as some read it) *it has exalted me*. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people; and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victoriously. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak and act but cowardly for ourselves: but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us with jealousy and emulation. *Isa. lxi. 5, 6.* There is spirit as well as strength in all God's operations for his people. And when God's right hand doth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises.

(3.) Of his life, ver. 17. *I shall not die by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, but live and declare the works of the Lord*, *i. e.* I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me; and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation. Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose but to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.

19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: 20. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21. I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22. The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. 23. This is the LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. 24. This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice, and be glad in it. 25. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applied it to the faces of the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, *Acts iv. 11.* Now observe here,

1. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, ver. 19, 20, 21. (1.) The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that cometh in the name of the Lord. *Open to me the gates of righteousness*. So the temple gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh: as the sacrifices there offered are called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances, must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must go into them, must enter into the holiest as far as we have leave, and praise the Lord. Our business within God's gates is to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. (2.) He sees admission granted him, ver. 20. *This is the gate of the Lord*, the gate of his appointing, into which the righteous shall enter; *q. d.* the gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. *Knock and it shall be opened unto you*. Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted: he is the way, no coming to the Father but by him, *John xiv. 6.* he is the door of the sheep, *John x. 9.* he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only the righteous, and they only shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, *Psalm lxxix. 27.* The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. (3.) He promiseth to give thanks to God for this favour, ver. 21. *I will praise thee*. They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

2. The prophecy itself, ver. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the headstone of the building: but its principal reference is to Christ and here we have,

(1.) His humiliation; he is the stone which the builders refused; he is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, *Dan. ii. 34.* He is a stone, not only for strength and firmness and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone, *1 Pet. ii. 6.* For the founda-

tion of the Gospel Church must be sapphires, *Isa. liv. 11.* This stone was rejected by the builders, *i. e.* by the rulers and people of the Jews, *Mat. xvi. 5-10, 11.* they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their own way, and deny him in the presence of Pilate, *Acts iii. 13.* when they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. They trampled upon his body, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they flung it at him. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejectors of Christ are rejected of God.

(2.) His exaltation; he is become the headstone of the corner, *i. e.* he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief topstone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence as in *Coloss. i. 18.* *the firstborn of our faith*. Thus highly hath God exalted him, because he hath humbled himself; and we in compliance with God's design will make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. *To me to live is Christ*.

(3.) The hand of God in all this. *This is the Lord's doing*, it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord: it is the product of his counsel, it is his contrivance, both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus was his work, *Acts ii. 23-iv. 27, 28.* He sent him, called him, his word went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did as Father's will; and this ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness*.

3. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

(1.) Let the day be solemnised to the honour of God with great joy, ver. 24. *This is the day the Lord has made*. The whole time of the gospel dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted: and so, 1. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath; *It is the day which the Lord hath made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days: he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2. The duty of the sabbath; the work of the day that is to be done in his day, *we will rejoice and be glad in it*; not only in the institution of the day, but there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it. Christ's becoming the head of the corner. This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven: See what a good Master we have, who having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

(2.) Let the exalted Redeemer be met and attended with joyful noises, ver. 25, 26.

1. Let him have the acclamations of the people as it should at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his days be a day of shout for joy; *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord*. This is like what he said and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. *Magnify him, Save now, I beseech thee*. (1.) Lord, I beseech thee, let this favour be my favour; and in order to that my favour; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies: Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his Kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, *Psalm lxxxi. 3.* Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering, and to conquer. (2.) Lord preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and red- ing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done: thus let prayer be made for him continually, *Psalm lxxii. 15.* On the Lord's day, whence we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well-wishers, *Matt. xxi. 9.* *Hosannah to the Son of David*, long live king Jesus; let him reign for ever.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, ver. 26. (1.) Let them bless the prince with their praises; *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Jesus Christ is he that cometh; *ἐρχόμενος*, he that was to come, and is yet to come again, *Rev. i. 8.* He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him to act for him, to do his will and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*, *i. e.* we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, *Psalm xlv. 2.* We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thine own. Bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, *Isa. lii. 7.* *John xiii. 20.* We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who hath said, *Surely I come quickly, would even so come*. (2.) Let them bless the people with their prayers: *we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord*: Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed to pronounce a blessing in his name upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, *Eph. vi. 24.* We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you; you are blessed out of the house of the Lord, *i. e.* with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, *Eph. i. 3.* and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you.

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, ver. 27. Here is, 1. The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ; *God is the Lord which hath shewed us light*; God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he hath promised, and perfecting what he hath begun, *Exod. vi. 3.* *He hath shewed us light*, *i. e.* he hath given us the knowledge of himself and his will; he hath shined upon us; so some; hath favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he hath given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is the light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. *The day which the Lord hath made* brings light with it, true light. 2. The duty which this privilege calls for; *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that being killed the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere),

elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, Rom. xii. 1. to be bound to the altar: spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, ver. 28, 29. 1. He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him, and interest in him: *Thou art my God on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me, and therefore I will praise thee.* 2. He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord, and in him it is that God is good to man, and that his mercy endureth for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it, ver. 1. for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closeth a prophecy of Christ: the angels give thanks for man's redemption, *Glory to God in the highest*, Luke ii. 14. for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, *Luke xix. 31. Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore Glory in the highest.*

P S A L M CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates, that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and toward the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book, where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting, and for the expressing of our devout affections; and it is true what some have said of this psalm, *He that shall read it conscientiously, it will either warm him or shame him.* 1. The composition of it is singular and very nice. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson saith, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our ABC. Perhaps, the penman found it of use to himself, to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with, might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them, both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse: Thus young people would the easier learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despiseth their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile. 2. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for which he praiseth God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are upon the matter synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, both that which tells us what God expects from us, and that which tells us what we may expect from him; and of the system of religion which is founded upon it and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him; as our sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built, are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is ver. 122.) in all this long psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence or David's practice, as ver. 75. 84. 121, and ver. 132. They are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day; which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul; so copious, so various is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our ruler and great benefactor; and that in

which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another; so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life; and to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every christian. Is any afflicted? is any merry? each will find that here that is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone, and when others join with us; for ordinarily the affections, especially of weaker christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

I. A L E P H.

1. **B**LESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shews that godly people are happy people; they are and shall be blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he doth not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness.

Now observe the characters of the happy people.

1. They are happy that make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves in their whole conversation by that rule; they walk in the law of the Lord, ver. 1. i. e. God's word is a law to them; not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversations; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forward in them towards the mark, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is walking in God's ways, ver. 3. the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our talk, but we must make it the rule of our walk. Walk in his ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, *Job xxii. 10, 11. xxxi. 7.*

2. That are upright and honest in their religion; *Undefiled in the way*; not only that keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, unspotted from the world, but that are habitually sincere in their intentions; in whose spirit there is no guile; who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way they took.

3. That are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that to them were committed the Oracles of God; and blessed are they who preserve pure and entire that sacred depositum: that keep his testimonies, as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye; so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those that shall come after them in this world. They that would walk in the law of the Lord, must keep his testimonies, i. e. his truth: those will not long make conscience of good practices, that do not adhere to good principles. Or, his testimonies, i. e. his covenant: the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony; those do not keep covenant with God, that do not keep the commandments of God.

4. That have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion, ver. 2. They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only: this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be the rewarder, the reward of all those that thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart; or that is it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. That carefully avoid all sin, ver. 3. They do no iniquity, i. e. they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do that are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it, they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways: Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law: The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at their liberty whether they would make the word of God their rule or no; that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is; He taught our first parents to question the command; *Math God said, Ye shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this, ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, to make religion our rule, and to keep them diligently; to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so, ver. 5. O that my ways were directed accordingly! i. e. not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, as that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments; not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agrees with the will and command of a good God. Thou wouldest have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them. This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, ver. 6. Note, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good man, that he hath a respect to all God's commandments. He hath a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, and aims to conform to it;

it; is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he doth in religion doth it in conscience of the command, because it is his duty. He hath respect to all the commandments, one as well another, because they are all backed with the same authority, *Jam. ii. 10, 11.* and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those that have a sincere respect to any command, will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man; both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins; and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. 2. Those that have a sincere respect to all God's commandments, shall not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, *1 John iii. 21.* They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself; they that are upright, may take the comfort of their uprightness: as if I be wicked woe to me; so if I be sincere, it is well with me.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, 1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to have learned God's righteous judgments; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desiring to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained: but as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head scholars and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures.*

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: *I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments;* intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him: and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for: though Christ keeps a free school, and teacheth without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his Word and for his Spirit: sure it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. And those have learned a great lesson that have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue: but those only are well learned in this mystery, that have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, i. e. are inward with him in praising of him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning. *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes.* We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes, that are come up to a full resolution in the strength of his grace to keep them.

3. His prayer to God not to leave him: *O forsake me not,* i. e. leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy spirit and grace from me, then I shall not keep thy statutes. Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them, for then the tempter will be too hard for them. Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost for a time withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly;* for woe unto me, if God departs from me.

2. B E T H.

9. Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked, by what means the next generation may be made better than this; *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day) there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way. *Youthful lusts,* *2 Tim. ii. 22.* these render the way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way, i. e. to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed: to make clean and keep clean, from the corruption that is in the world through lust, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves inquire, by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to the word of God, and it is the honour of the word of God, that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. 1. Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men, than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. 2. They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or chusing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture rules, so that their way be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from my commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God. *I have sought thee,* sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; *for should not a people seek unto their God?* If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee, and thou never saidst, seek in vain, nor wilt

say of to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart; sought thee only, sought thee diligently.

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; thou hast inclined me to seek my precepts, never suffer me to wander from them. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; he hid it in his heart, laid it up there that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a dear love for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts: if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; that I might not sin against thee. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it: and the most effectual way to prevent it, is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with *it is written;* may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements and his threatenings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: *Blessed art thou, O Lord.* Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

1. He asks grace from God. *Teach me thy statutes,* i. e. give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness. *Teach me thy statutes,* that I may know how to bless thee who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God, *ver. 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.* This he did not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment according to the word of God, not only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he shewed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's words from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, things new and old. They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, *ver. 12.* that God would teach him; and here he pleads, *Lord I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it; for to him that hath shall be given.*

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it. *Lord, teach me thy statutes:* for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them, *ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments,* i. e. in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that part of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches;* as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul take thine ease;* in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he doth, that he will do, *2 Cor. xi. 12.* they that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts, *ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts.* He not only discoursed of them to others, many do that only to shew their knowledge and authority, but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye. *I will have respect unto thy ways,* as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoiceth in this light, but *I will still, I will for ever delight myself in thy statutes;* not only think of them, but do them with delight, *ver. 16.* David took more delight in God's statutes, than in the pleasure of his court, or the honours of his camp: more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; *I will not forget thy word;* not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it. They that meditate in God's word and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. G I M E L.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with*

with me, that I may live. It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; which, if withheld, we die; or which is equivalent, our lives are embittered, and we are become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, when there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye; not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry: but that I may live and keep thy word, may observe it myself, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live, the better I shall do.

18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law.

Observe here,

1. That there are wonderful things in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet to behold; not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long hid from the wise and prudent, but are now revealed unto babes. If there were wonders in the law much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wonderful things, when the angels themselves reach, to look into them, 1 Pet. i. 12.

2. Those that would see the wonderful things of God's law and gospel, must beg of him to open their eyes, and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace causes the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God hath said, Let there be light, have yet need to be further lightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, and they, who at first saw men as trees walking, may come to see all things clearly: and the more God opens our eyes, the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

19 I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me.

Here we have,

1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition; I am a stranger in the earth. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, and land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it as most men: God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him, he had a name, like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth, and must so account ourselves.

2. The request he makes to God thereupon: Hide not thy commandments from me, he means more; Lord, shew thy commandments to me, let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. I am a stranger, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. I am a stranger here, and must be gone shortly, by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.

20. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

David had prayed that God would open his eyes, ver. 18. and open the law, ver. 19. Now, here he pleads the earnestness of his desire towards knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

1. His desire was importunate; My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments; or, as some read it, it is taken up and wholly employed in longing for thy judgments: The whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone, if I want the word of God, the conduct, converse, and comfort of it.

2. It was constant, at all times, it was not now and then in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul, to hunger after the word of God, as its necessary food which there is no living without.

21. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

Here, is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad, they are proud, they magnify themselves above others, and yet that is not all, they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with, and in opposition to the will of God, as if their hearts and tongues and all were all their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin; and the tenor of their law is no better, they do err from thy commandments, as Israel, that did always err in their hearts: they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? as Pharaoh, Who is the Lord?

2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for God resists the proud; and they that threw off the commandments of the law, lay themselves under its curse, Gal. iii. 10. and he that now beholds them afar off, will shortly say to them, go ye cursed. The proud sinners bless themselves, God cursed them; and though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world; yet they are oftentimes severely rebuked in this world; providence crossed them, vexed them, and wherein they dealt proudly, God shews himself above them; and these rebukes are earnest calls of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God, and pray the more earnestly that he might not err from God's commandments. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22. Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that

they might be removed, or as the word is, rolled from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned; some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken off it, intimates that they lay heavy upon him. Hard words and foul words indeed break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, Lord, remove them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty, or discouraged in it. God hath all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust; to him we may appeal as the avenger of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise, that he will clear up our righteousness as the light, Psal. xlvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us, and do us good, and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God, For I have kept thy testimonies. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, 1. That he was jeered for well-doing; he was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, it will be turned into the greater honour shortly. 2. That he was not jeered out of well-doing, Lord, remove it from me, for I have kept thy testimonies notwithstanding. If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

24. Princes also did sit, and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

See here, 1. How David was abused even by great men, that should have known better his character, and his case, and have been more generous; Princes did sit, sit in counsel, sit in judgment, and speak against me. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood; when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ; for they were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses; he meditated in God's statutes, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man he heard not; when they spoke against him, he found that in the word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. They that have pleasure in communion with God, may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24. Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes, ver. 23. which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him.

1. Did the affliction make him sad? the word of God comforted him, and was his delight, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul, then when other comforts are embittered.

2. Did it perplex him; was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently, and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors, both to princes and private persons; they are the men of my counsel, so the word is. There is more safety and satisfaction in consulting them, than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them, and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

4. D A L E T H.

25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. David's complaint. We would have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he saith himself, My soul not only rolls in the dust, but cleaves to the dust; which is a complaint either, 1. Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body, both which are dust, and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties; when he would do good, evil is present with him. God spoke Adam not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, Dust thou art, Gen. iii. 19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's of a body of death he carried about with him. The remainders of indwelling corruption are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul. Or, 2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble, Without were fightings, within were fears, and both together brought him even to the dust of death, Psal. xlii. 15. and his soul cleave inseparably to it.

2. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition: Quicken thou me according to thy word. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion. Note, when we find ourselves dull we must go to God, and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's Word as a means of quickening; for the words which God speaks, they are spirit, and they are life to those that receive them; and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular, God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26. I have declared my ways, and thou hearest me: teach me thy statutes. 27. Make me to understand the ways of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wonderful works.

Here is, 1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God, David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God; I have declared my ways, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises. Thus Jephthah uttered all his words, and Hezekiah spread his letters before the Lord. I have declared my ways, i. e. my wants, and burdens, and troubles I meet with in my way; or my sins, my by-ways, I have made an ingenuous confession of them, and thou heardest me, hearest me patiently all I had to say, and tookest cognizance of my case. It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John v. 14, 15.

2. David

2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the Word and Spirit in an ordinary way; *teach me thy statutes*, that is, *make me to understand the way of thy precepts*. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he doth not say, Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be; but, Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldst have me to do as the case stands. Note, Those that in all their ways acknowledge God, may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is, by learning his statutes, and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts. See 1 John i. 6, 7.

3. The good use he would make of this, for the honour of God, and the edification of others; let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts, give a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of divine things, so shall I talk with the more assurance and the more to the purpose, of thy wonderful works. We can talk with the better grace of God's wonderful works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

28. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, 1. David's remonstrance of his own griefs; *My soul melteth for heaviness*, which is to the same purpose with ver. 25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust*. Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God.

2. His request for God's grace.

1. That God would enable him to bear his affliction well, and graciously support him under it; *Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word* which as the bread of life strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens of an afflicted state that the Spirit may not fail. *Strengthen me according to that word, Deut. xxxiii. 25. As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

2. That God would keep him from sin, any unlawful indirect means for the extricating himself out of his troubles, ver. 29. *Remove from me the way of lying*: David was conscious to himself of a readiness to this sin; he had in a flint cheat d Ahimelech, 1 Sam. xxi. 2 and Achish, ver. 13. and chap. xxvii. 10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with colour of pious fraud, and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays, that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more. lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads, and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

3. That he might always be under the conduct and protection of God's government; *Grant me thy law graciously*; grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his hand; for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use, Deut. xvii. 18, but he prays that he might have it written in his heart, for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. Grant it me more and more. They that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more, and love it better. Grant it me graciously; he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges, and God is truly gracious to those, whom he makes truly gracious by giving them his law.

30. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord put me not to shame. 32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

1. That those who will make any thing to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and deliberate choice: so David did, *I have chosen the way of truth*. Note, 1. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth: the principles it is founded on are of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. 2. We must therefore choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

2. That those who have chosen the way of truth, must have a constant regard to the Word of God as the rule of their walking: *Thy judgments have I laid before me*, as he that learns to write lays his copy before him that he may write according to it: as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the Word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

3. That those who made religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully: *I have stuck to thy testimonies* with an unchanged affection, and an unshaken resolution; stuck to them at all times, through all trials; *I have chosen them*, and therefore *I have stuck to them*. Note, The choosing christian is likely to be the sticking christian; when those that are christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.

4. That those that stick to the Word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means that, when he begs, *Lord, put me not to shame*, i. e. never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services which will put me to the greatest confusion.

5. That the more comfort God gives us, the more duty he expects from us, ver. 32. Here we have, 1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion; *I will run the way of thy commandments*. Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither, and be still pressing forward: it concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness; we then run the way of our duty when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and lay aside every weight, Heb. xii. 1. 2. His dependance upon God for grace to do so. I shall then abound in thy work when thou shalt enlarge my heart. God by his Spirit, enlargeth the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom; for that is called largeness of heart, 1 Kings iv. 29. When he sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

5. H E.

33. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes and I shall keep it unto the end. 34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Here, 1. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests about him, and was himself well instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that none teacheth like him, Job xxxvi. 22. Observe here, 1. What he desires to be taught; not the notions or language of God's statutes but the way of them; the way of applying them to myself, and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*, Isa. xxx. 21. 2. How he desires to be taught, in such a way as no man can teach him, *Lord give me understanding*. As the God of nature has given us intellectual powers and faculties: but here we are taught to pray, that as the God of grace he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which through the corruption of nature we are averse to; *Give me understanding*, i. e. an enlightened understanding; for it is as good have no understanding at all as not have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the Word answer the end, unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding, 1 John v. 20.

2. He promised faithfully that he would be a good scholar; if God would teach him he was sure he would learn to good purpose, *I shall keep thy law*; which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and which, that I may do, is the reason why I desire so earnestly to be taught. If God, by his Spirit, gives us a right and good understanding, we shall be, 1. Constant in our obedience; *I shall keep it to the end*, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity. It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey. 2. Cordial in our obedience; *I shall observe it with my whole heart*, i. e. with pleasure and delight, and with vigor and resolution. That way that the whole heart goes the whole man goes: and that should be the way of God's commandment, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. 36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it: here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty: for it is God that works in us both to will and to do, as well as to understand what is good, Phil. ii. 13. both the good heart and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

1. The grace he prays for, 1. That God would make him able to do his duty; *Make me to go*, strengthen me for every good work. Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causeth us to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. and this is that which David here begs. 2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it; *Incline my heart to thy testimonies*, i. e. to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do, and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty, as that which is agreeable to the new nature, and really advantageous to me. Duty is then done with delight when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us; and the more backward we find ourselves to it, the more earnest we must be for that grace.

2. The sin he prays against, and that is covetousness; *Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies*, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness. That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin: those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God. See in what way God deals with men; not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good, and an aversion to that which is evil.

3. His plea to enforce this prayer, Lord, bring me to, and keep me in the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou that hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments, wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thine own work?

37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, 1. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*. The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world are the vanities; the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness; the eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore as we ought to make a covenant with our eyes, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon that which is dangerous, Job xxxi. 1. so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight, and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heavenward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: *Quicken thou me in thy way*; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit. Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace: a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view, will not rid ground; but if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38. Stablish thy word unto thy servant who is devoted to thy fear.

Here

Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and dispose, and taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants that though they have their infirmities and defects, yet are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God*, and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear: they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establish his word to them*, i. e. that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for: we need not be so griping as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear; for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, *ver. 22*. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give *occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, which would blemish his own reputation, and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays, that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to *deliver him from all his transgressions*, that he *might not be the reproach of the foolish*, which he feared, *Psalm xxxix. 8*. or, he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their *lying lips be put to silence*.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and *thy judgments are right and good*, just and kind to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while *he that judgeth us is the Lord*. Or thus, Thy word and ways and thy holy religion are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, *Lord, turn them away*; let not religion be wounded through my side.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professeth the ardent affection he had to the Word of God, *I have longed after thy precepts*; not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more, and do them better; and am still pressing forward towards perfection. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: *Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed*; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected.

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. Thou that hast wrought in me this longings desire, put life into me that I may prosecute it: *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise. Where God hath wrought to will he will work to do, and where he hath wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

6. V A U.

41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word. 42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. Lord, thou art my saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy, *Let thy salvation come to me*: hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses; and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it.

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. 1. The grace of God, *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation*: our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *Jude 21*. Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view, let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me, 2. The promise of God: *Let it come according to thy word*, thy word of promise, *I trust in thy word*, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me*, for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me. When God saves those out of their troubles that trusted in him, he effectually silenceth those who would have *shamed that council of the poor*, *Psalm xiv. 6*. and their reproaches will be for ever silenced, when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44. So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to *speak a word in season* for the glory of God, *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth*. He means, Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth, let me have that wisdom and courage which is necessary to enable me, both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury *things new and old*, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it. We have need to pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, the *word of truth* was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty.

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand

us in no stead. 1. David professeth his confidence in God. Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for I have *hoped in those judgments* of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me.

2. He professeth his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace, *so shall I keep thy law continually*. If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will. Thus shall the *man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*, *2 Tim. iii. 17. Col. iii. 16*. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, (1.) *Continually*, without trifling; God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. (2.) *For ever and ever*, without backsliding; we must never be *t weary of well doing*. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we *keep his law for ever and ever*. Of this, Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred *depositum* to the rising generation, (*2 Tim. ii. 22*.) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept *for ever and ever*, i. e. from one generation to another, according to that promise, *Isa. lix. 21*. *My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed*.

45. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. 46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God: *I seek thy precepts*, *ver. 45*. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to *understand what the will of the Lord is*, and to discover the intimations of his mind. *I seek thy precepts*, for I have loved them, *ver. 47*. and again, *ver. 48*. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me. All that love God love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace.

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty: *I will walk at liberty*, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly. The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, *John viii. 32-36. Luke i. 74, 75*.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty; *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings*. Before David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul and Achish; but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would *speak of God's testimonies*, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. iii. 16. Acts iv. 20*. After David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them; no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to shew that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of *God's testimonies*, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty, *ver. 47*. *I will delight myself in thy commandments*, in conversing with them, in conforming to them; I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God. The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty. *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*; which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, *Psalm cxliii. 6*. I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go; but a close application of mind to the observance of them; I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, i. e. I will put forth all the strength I have to do it. The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be *lifted up*, *Heb. xii. 12*.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty, *ver. 48*. *I will meditate in thy statutes*; not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner. By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. Z A I N.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided.

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped. Lord, I desire no more but that thou wouldst *remember thy word unto thy servant*, and do as thou hast said; see *1. Chron. xvii. 23*. Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy council: Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken, and wilt thou not make it good? *Gen. xxxii. 9. Exod. xxxiii. 12*.

2. That God, who had given him the promise of the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Hath God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Hath he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will according to our faith work for us, and will not disappoint us.

5. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word:

1. As a means of his sanctification: *Thy word hath quickened me.* It made me when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was in duty: it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent.

Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, needed something to support him; because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then. The word of God has much in it speaks comfort in affliction, but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. Through grace it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in afflictions, under all events.

1. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet I have not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, the proud had him greatly in derision, they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called him a hypocrite; for his seriousness, and called it moroseness; for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were proud that sat in the scorner's seat, and valued themselves by it.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; I have not declined from thy law for all this: but, if this be to be vile, (as he said when Michael had him greatly in derision) I will be yet more vile. He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never balk any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way, though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself: he not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, save only in the matters of his God, Dan. vi. 4. They that are do it for their adherence to God's law, may comfort themselves with this, that the reproach of Christ will prove in the end greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.

2. That which he comforted himself with, was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, i. e. the providence of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement to the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; they forsake thy law. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin, is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David: it frightened him; it put him into an amazement, he trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischief thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemy be as the wicked,* and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was hereby afraid would be sunk and ruined. He doth not say, *Horror has taken hold of me,* because of their cruel designs against me, but because of the contempt they put on God and his law. Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. i. 30. xxiii. 14. Hos. vi. 10. Jer. ii. 12.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition: he was in the house of his pilgrimage, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble, he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly; or as his lot, in common with all: this world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn; we must confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, that are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

2. His comfort in this state: *Thy statutes have been my songs,* with which I here entertained myself as travellers used to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man used to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart, more than they have that chant to the sound of the viol. Amos vi. 5. Is any afflicted then? let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, Psal. cxxxviii. 5.

55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God: he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind; God's name

is the discovery he hath made of himself to us in and by his word. This is his memorial unto all generations, and therefore we should always keep it in memory: remember it in the night, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping, David was remembering God's name, and, by conning that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

2. The confidence he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is preloved to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of his law: *I remembered thy name in the night,* and therefore was careful to keep thy law all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection, if our own hearts can witness for us that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

3. The advantage he got by it, ver. 56. *This I had, because I kept thy precepts.* Some understand this indefinitely; *This I had,* i. e. I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, because I kept thy precepts. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refers it to what goes immediately before; I had the comfort of keeping thy law, because I kept it. Note, God's work is its own wages; an heart to obey the will of God is the most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do, and shall do in the service of God; the branch that beareth fruit is made more fruitful, John xvi. 2.

8. C H E T H.

57. Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said, that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

1. He makes the favour of God his felicity: *Thou art my portion, O Lord.* Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world; their portion is in this life, they look no further, they desire no more, these are their good things, Luke xvi. 25. but all that are sanctified take the Lord for their portion of their inheritance and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter; Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy.

2. He makes the law of God his rule: *I have said, that I would keep thy word;* and what I have said, by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end. Note, Those that take God for their portion, must take him for their prince, and swear allegiance to him: and having promised to keep his word, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, Psal. cxix. 1.

58. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David having in the foregoing verse rested upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe, 1. What he prayed for; having taken God for his portion, he intreated his favour, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it; but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble supplicants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us, and smile upon us. He prays, *Be merciful to me,* in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future.

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59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

David had said he would keep God's word, ver. 57. and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

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Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and dispose, and taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants that though they have their infirmities and defects, yet are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God*, and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear: they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establish his word to them*, i. e. that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for: we need not be so griping as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear; for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, *ver. 22*. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his own reputation, and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays, that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to deliver him from all his transgressions, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared, *Psalm xxxix. 8*. or, he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their *lying lips be put to silence*.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and thy judgments are right and good, just and kind to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while he that judgeth us is the Lord. Or thus, Thy word and ways and thy holy religion are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, Lord, turn them away; let not religion be wounded through my side.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professeth the ardent affection he had to the Word of God, *I have longed after thy precepts*; not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more, and do them better; and am still pressing forward towards perfection. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: *Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed*; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected.

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. Thou that hast wrought in me this longings desire, put life into me that I may prosecute it: *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise. Where God hath wrought to will he will work to do, and where he hath wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

6. V A U.

41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word. 42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. Lord, thou art my saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy, *Let thy salvation come to me*: hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses; and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it.

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. 1. The grace of God, *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation*: our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *Jude 21*. Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view, let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me, 2. The promise of God: *Let it come according to thy word*, thy word of promise, *I trust in thy word*, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me*, for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me. When God saves those out of their troubles that trusted in him, he effectually silenceth those who would have shamed that council of the poor, *Psalm xiv. 6*. and their reproaches will be for ever silenced, when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44. So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to speak a word in season for the glory of God, *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth*. He means, Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth, let me have that wisdom and courage which is necessary to enable me, both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury things new and old, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it. We have need to pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, the word of truth was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty.

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand

us in no stead. 1. David professeth his confidence in God. Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me.

2. He professeth his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace, *so shall I keep thy law continually*. If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will. Thus shall the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work, *2 Tim. iii. 17. Col. iii. 16*. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, (1.) *Continually*, without trilling; God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. (2.) *For ever and ever*, without backsliding; we must never be weary of well doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we keep his law for ever and ever. Or thus, Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred depositum to the rising generation, (*2 Tim. ii. 22*.) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept for ever and ever, i. e. from one generation to another, according to that promise, *Isa. lix. 21*. My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.

45. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. 46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God: *I seek thy precepts*, *ver. 45*. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is, and to discover the intimations of his mind. *I seek thy precepts*, for I have loved them, *ver. 47*. and again, *ver. 48*. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me. All that love God love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace.

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty: *I will walk at liberty*, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly. The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, *John viii. 32-36. Luke i. 74, 75*.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty; *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings*. Before David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul and Achish; but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. iii. 16. Acts iv. 20*. After David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them; no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to shew that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty, *ver. 47. I will delight myself in thy commandments*, in conversing with them, in conforming to them; I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God. The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty. *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*; which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, *Psalm cxliii. 6*. I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go; but a close application of mind to the observance of them; I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, i. e. I will put forth all the strength I have to do it. The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, *Heb. xii. 12*.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty, *ver. 48. I will meditate in thy statutes*; not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner. By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. Z A I N.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided.

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped. Lord, I desire no more but that thou wouldst remember thy word unto thy servant, and do as thou hast said; see *1. Chron. xvii. 23*. Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy council: Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word. Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea. Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken, and wilt thou not make it good? *Gen. xxxii. 9. Exod. xxxiii. 12*.

2. That God, who had given him the promise of the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Hath God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Hath he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will according to our faith work for us, and will not disappoint us.

5. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

His David's experience of benefit by the word:

1. A means of his sanctification: *Thy word hath quickened me.* It made me when I was dead in sin, it has many a time made me lively when I was in duty: it has quickened me to that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent.

Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, he needed something to support him; because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then. The word of God has much in it that speaks comfort in affliction, but these only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. Through grace it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in afflictions, under all events.

1. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet I have not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, the proud had him greatly in derision, they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called him a fool; for his seriousness, and called it moroseness; for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were proud that sat in the scorner's seat, and valued themselves by it.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; I have not declined from thy law for all this: but, if this be to be vile, (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision) I will be yet more vile. He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never balk any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way, though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself: he not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, *save only in the matters of his God*, Dan. vi. 4. They that are derided for their adherence to God's law, may comfort themselves with this, that the reproach of Christ will prove in the end greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.

2. That which he comforted himself with, was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, i. e. the providence of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement to the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; they forsake thy law. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin, is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David: it frightened him; it put him into an amazement, he trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemy be as the wicked.* and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was hereby afraid would be sunk and ruined. He doth not say, *Horror has taken hold of me*, because of their cruel designs against me, but because of the contempt they put on God and his law. Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. v. 30. xxiii. 14. Hos. vi. 10. Jer. ii. 12.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition: he was in the house of his pilgrimage, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble, he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly; or as his lot, in common with all: this world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn; we must confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, that are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

2. His comfort in this state: *Thy statutes have been my songs*, with which I here entertained myself as travellers used to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man used to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart, more than they have that chant to the sound of the viol. Amos vi. 5. Is any afflicted then? let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, Psa. cxxxviii. 5.

55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God: he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind; God's name

is the discovery he hath made of himself to us in and by his word. This is his memorial unto all generations, and therefore we should always keep it in memory: remember it in the night, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping, David was remembering God's name, and, by conning that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

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61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me ; but I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1. The malice of David's enemies against him ; they were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness ; there were bands of troops of them confederate against him ; they did him all the mischief they could, they robbed him ; having endeavoured to take away his good name, ver. 51. they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in the time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects ; Absalom his palace ; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of : David, though a man of war, could not keep his own : *Thieves break through and steal.*

2. The testimony of David's conscience for him, that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did, when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him. *But I have not forgotten thy law.* No care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God, for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee : because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is in this psalm much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving ; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings ; he doth not say, *I will give thanks*, because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of, but *because of thy righteous judgments* ; all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of. We must give thanks for the asserting God's honour, and the accomplishing of his word in all he doth in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings ; he would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep ; and so zealous was he for the honour of God, that when others were in their beds, he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence, he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps, in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time, when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God, here he speaks the great love he had to the people of God ; and observe,

1. Why he loved them ; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest, and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as feared God and kept his precepts, and so did him honour, and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him.

2. How he shewed his love to them. He was a companion of them. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together ; he sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows. Heb. x. 33. he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs : He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, Psal. xv. 14. James ii. 1.

64. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy : teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures, according to their necessities and capacities ; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only in the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy : not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures taste of God's goodness ; his tender mercies are over all his works.

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity : *Teach me thy statutes.* Thou feedest the young ravens that cry with food proper for them, and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and can not subsist without ? *The earth is full of thy mercy* ; and is not heaven too ? wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places ? A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Sure he that will not let his birds be unfed, will not let his children be untaught.

9. TETH.

65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. 66. Teach me good judgment and knowledge : for I have believed thy commandments.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgement of God's gracious dealings with him all along. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* However God hath dealt with us, we must own he hath dealt well with us, better than we deserve ; and all in love, and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations ; he hath done well for all his servants, never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me*, not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise, are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction.

Teach me good judgment and knowledge, that, by thy grace, I render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me. *ch me a good taste*, so the word signifies, a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil ; *See ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat.* We should pray to God for sound mind, that we may have our spiritual senses exercised, Heb. v. 14. Many have knowledge that have little judgment ; they that have both, well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the see of God and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea ; *for I have believed thy commandments*, received them, and consented to them that they are good, submitted to their government ; therefore, Lord teach me. Where God hath given a good heart, a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

67. Before I was afflicted, I went astray : but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he had experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition : *Before I was afflicted*, while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, *I went astray* from God and my duty : sin is going astray, and then we are most apt to waver from God, when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity : it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See Psalm xxx. 6. It is good for us when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray before we were afflicted, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state ; *Now I have kept thy word*, and have been recovered from my wanderings. God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself that have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and shew us the vanity of the world they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first, and then to his father.

68. Thou art good and doest good ; teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praiseth God's goodness, and gives him the glory of it : *Thou art good, and doest good.* All that have any knowledge of God, and dealings with him, will own that he doth good, and therefore he will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God doth every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration, and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the conduct and influence of it : *Teach me thy statutes.* Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures : this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me, instruct me in my duty, and incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and doest good ; Lord, teach me thy statutes*, that I may be good and do good, may have a good heart and live a good life. It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will teach them his way, because he is good and upright, Psalm xxv. 8.

69. The proud have forged a lie against me : but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. 70. Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in thy law.

David here tells how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty ; they have forged a lie against me : thus they aimed to take away his good name : nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. They that were proud envied David's reputation because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him : and took a pride in trampling upon him : they therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories, which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied ? He will bear it patiently ; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render evil for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silent. He will go on his duty with constancy and resolution ; let them say what they will *I will keep thy precepts*, and not dread their reproach.

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty : *Their heart is as fat as grease.* The proud are at ease, Psalm cxii. 4. They are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it ; and this makes them, 1. Senseless and secure, and stupid ; they are past feeling : thus the phrase is used, Isa. vi. 10. *Make the heart of his people fat.* They are not sensible of the touching of the word of God, or his rod. 2. Senseless and voluptuous. *Their eyes stand out with fatness*, Psalm lxxiii. 7. they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good ; and much good may it do them, I would not change conditions with them ; *I delight in thy law* ; I build my security upon the promises of God's word, and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights. The children of God that are acquainted with spiritual pleasure, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted : that I might learn thy statutes.

See here, 1. That it hath been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked live in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction : *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people*, Psalm lxxiii. 10.

2. That it hath been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally, *It was good for me* ; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to, which otherwise had been unlearned and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes ; and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He had chastened him, taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.*

72. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

This

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much balance the loss, that he was really a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquainted with by his affliction, was better to him than the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison of what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, therefore he valued the law because it is the law of God's mouth, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he values it; his riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read and believe David's Psalms and Solomon's Ecclesiastes, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

73. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me, give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here 1. David adores God as the God of nature, and the author of his being; *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.* Job x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands, as the first man was, *Psal. cxxxix. 15. 16. Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I had never been, but fashioned me, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endowed with these powers and faculties; and we must own we are fearfully and wonderfully made.*

2. He addresseth himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation, and live to some purpose. *Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.* The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men, is by giving men an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul and gains possession of it.

74. They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

Here is, 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation; *I have hoped in thy word:* and I have not found it in vain to do so, it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectation from it. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.

2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation; *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me* relieved by my hope in thy word, and delivered according to my hope. The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. St. Paul often hopes that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, *2 Cor. i. 11. — iv. 15.* Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those, and as I may say, proud of them who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75. I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected; *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right,* are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he doth us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature, and wife and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his judgments are right, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good; *In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me,* pursuant to the great design of my salvation. It is easier to own in general that God's judgments are right, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, even my afflictions are just and kind.

76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.
77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. They that own the justice of God in their afflictions, as David had done, ver. 75. may in faith and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's merciful kindness, ver. 76. his tender mercies, ver. 77. he can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. Let these come to me, i. e. the evidence of them; clear it up to me, that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store, and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance.

2. The benefit he promised himself from God's loving kindness; Let it come to me for my comfort, ver. 76. that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me. Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy. Let it come to me that I may live, i. e. that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me; for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. In his favour is life, in his frowns are death. A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, 1. God's promise. Let me have thy kindness according to thy word unto thy servant: the kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it. Our

Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them and they may plead it with him. 2. His own confidence and complacency, in that promise. *Thy law is my delight,* i. e. I hope in thy word, and rejoice in that hope. Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78. Let the proud be ashamed, for they dealt perversely with me, without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.
79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shows,

1. How little he valued the ill will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did: Even those that deal most fairly, yet may meet with those that deal perversely. But David mattered it not: for, 1. He knew it was without cause, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it doth not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. 2. He could pray in faith that they might be ashamed of it; God's dealing favourably with him, might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. Let them be ashamed, i. e. let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin. 3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. However they deal with me, I will meditate in thy precepts, and entertain myself with them.

2. How much he valued the good will of saints; and how desirous to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them, and communion with them. Let those that fear thee turn to me; he doth not mean so much that they might side with him and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him; and pray for him, and all ciate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him: this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them turn to me again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest but intelligent, that have known thy testimonies, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80. Let my heart be found in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be found in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with and subject to the power of it; that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy; that I be not ashamed. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here if it be repented of, or hereafter if it be not. Let my heart be found, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself; Let my heart be found, that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day.

11. C A P H.

81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.
82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the psalmist,

1. Longing for help from heaven; *My soul fainteth, mine eyes fail.* He longs for the salvation of the Lord, and for his word, i. e. salvation according to the word; he is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but the objects of faith; salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning, and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old Testament church: the souls of the faithful even faint to see that salvation of which the prophets testified, *1 Pet. i. 12.* their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch, and they could not steadfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and having been long so his eyes cried out, *When wilt thou comfort me?* Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word. Observe, 1. The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. 2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are long deferred, so that they are ready to fall and faint in the expectation of them. 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon it, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon.

2. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come; and tarrying till it doth come. But I hope in thy word, and but for hope the heart would break. When the eyes fail, yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him:

1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity. Lord, make haste to help me, for I am become like a bottle in the smoke, a leathern bottle, which if it hung any while in the smoke was not only blackened with soot, but dried and parched, and shrivelled up; David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed; thus doth man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with the smoke, is thrown by, and no more use of it; who will put wine into such old bottles; Thus was David in his low estate looked upon as a despised, broken vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no measure. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

2. Because though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise; yet.

yet do I not forget thy statutes. Whatever our outward condition is, we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds, no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law, Prov. xxi. 5. so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance: and if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope, that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

84. How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, 1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself, he bore no malice to any, but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay, Rom. xii. 19. as the God that sits on the throne judging right. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people: Tribulation to them that troubled them; Enoch foretold it, Jude 14. which prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to: and that day we are to look for, and pray for the hastening of; Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few, so some; therefore let them not all be miserable; and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, before I go hence, and shall be seen no more. Or rather the days of my affliction are many, thou seest, Lord, how many they be, when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes for the elect's sake, the days of trouble are shortened; O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am thy servant: and therefore as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until that thou have mercy on me.

85. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. 86. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully: help thou me. 87. They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and christians, that he was grievously persecuted: as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm which complain of this, as those here. Where observe,

1. The account he gives of his persecutors, and their malice against him. (1.) They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. (2.) They were unjust, they persecuted him wrongfully; so far was he from giving them any provocation, that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. (3.) They were spiteful, they digged pits for him: which speaks them deliberate in their designs against him, and that what they did was of malice prepense: it intimates likewise, that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom; and that they were industrious, and would stick at no pains to do him a mischief; and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, Psalm xxxv. 7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. (4.) They herein shewed their enmity to God himself: the pits they digged for him were not after God's law; he means, they were very much against his law, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour, and hath particularly said, Touch not mine anointed. The law appointed, that if a man digged a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief, Exod. xxi. 33, 34. much more, when it was digged with a mischievous design. (5.) They carried on their designs against him so far, that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible, that those which shall shortly be consummate in heaven, may be for the present almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies, (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy) that they are not quite consumed; But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

2. His application to God in his persecuted state. (1.) He acknowledgeth the truth and goodness of his religion, though he fastered; however it be, all thy commandments are faithful, and therefore whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it. True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. Men are false, I find them so; men of low degree, men of high degree are so, there is no trusting them; but all thy commandments are faithful, on them I may rely. (2.) He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him; They persecute me, help thou me: help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles. God help me, is an excellent comprehensive prayer, it is pity it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word.

3. His adherence to his duty notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors, ver. 87. But I forsook not thy precepts. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was near to him in this world than forsake the word of God; would sooner lose his life, than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88. Quicken me after thy loving-kindness: so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty; his constant desire and design is to keep the testimony of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule, and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. These we must keep, whatever we lose.

2. David in prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; make me alive, and make me lively, so shall I keep thy testimonies; implying, that otherwise I shall not keep them: we cannot proceed nor persevere in the good way, unless God quickens us and puts life into us we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, Quicken me in thy righteousness, ver. 40. but here, Quicken me after thy loving-kindness. The sure token of God's good will towards us, is his good work in us.

3. L A M E D.

89. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. 90. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou

hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all are thy servants.

Here, 1. The psalmist acknowledgeth the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself, so some read it; thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it: The word, by which the heavens were made, is settled therein the abiding products of it; or the settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth: All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It is settled in heaven, i. e. in the secret counsel of God, which is hid in himself, and is far above, out of our sight, and is immovable, as mountains of brass. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, thy faithfulness is unto all generations, i. e. thy promise is sure to every age of the church, and it cannot be antiquated by track of time. The promises that look never so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produceth for proof of it the constancy of the course of nature: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth: it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the tosses of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds, remains unmoved. Thy, i. e. the heaven and the earth, and all the hosts of both, continue to this day according to thine ordinances; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them, they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended. The stability of the ordinances day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. xxxiii. 20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah, Gen. viii. 22. that day and night, summer and winter observe a steady course. They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants, they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both are thy servants. All the creatures are in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth?

92. Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1. The great distress that David was in; he was in affliction, and ready to perish in his afflictions; not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him that he had not perished: that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles; but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God, and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, we have cleansed our hands in vain, or what profit is it that we have served God?

2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight, 1. It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity. 2. It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time, if we please.

93. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution, I will never forget thy precepts, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule. It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never at any time cast off our religion, and never, upon no occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it.

2. A very good reason for it; For by them thou hast quickened me: not only they are quickening, but, 1. They have been so to me, I have found them so: those speak best of the things of God that speak by experience, who can say, that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. 2. Thou had made them so; the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us; ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but ordinarily the grace of God works by the word, and makes use of it as a means of quickening; and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God hath put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found such benefit by, and hope still to find. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections: if we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that doth really quicken us to and in our duty, is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain it is well enough.

94. I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy precepts.

Here, 1. David claims relation to God: I am thine: devoted to thee and owned by thee, thine in covenant. He doth not say, thou art mine, (as Dr. Manton observes) though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge, but I am thine, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor doth he say, I am thus, but I am thine, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's property in him; I am thine, not my own, nor the world's.

2. He prays his claim: I have sought thy precepts, i. e. I have carefully enquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it. This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.

3. He improves his claim: I am thine, save me, save me from sin, save me from ruin. Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his, may be sure that he will protect them, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal. iii. 18.

95. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

Here. 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me to destroy me*: they were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident, they expected, (so some read it) that they would destroy him, they thought themselves sure of their prey.

2. He comforts himself in the word of God, as his protection. While they are contriving my destruction, *I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to me my salvation. God's testimonies are then likely to be our support when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience,

1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy; *I have seen an end of all perfection*: poor perfection which one sees an end of! yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath the strongest overcome, Achish the swiftest overtaken, Ahithophel the wisest befooled, Absalom the fairest deformed, and in short he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection; he saw it by faith, he saw it by observation, he saw an end of the perfection of the creature, both in respect of sufficiency, it was scanty and defective (there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of continuance, it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: *but thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad*. The sword of God reaches to all cases, to all times: the divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burdens, wants, and grievances, and hath that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. M E M.

97. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: *O how love I thy law!* He professes his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemence: he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptation of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this: what we love, we love to think of: by this it appeared that David loved the word of God, it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts; and was delivered into it as into a mould; it was his meditation not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company, nay, and *all the day* some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

98. Thou through thy commandments has made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. 99. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. 100. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

1. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country, as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp; which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it: he had it from God as the author, *Thou hast made me wise*; all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means; by his commandments and his testimonies. These are able to make us wise to salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good work. 1. These David took for his constant companions, *they are ever with me*, ever in my mind, ever in my eye. A good man wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. 2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts: they were his meditation, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matter of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. 3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: *I keep thy precepts*, i. e. I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge, is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ*, shall know more of it; the pure in heart shall see God here.

2. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments and making them his rule, he learnt to behave himself wisely in all his ways, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. 1. He outwitted his enemies; God by these means made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him, than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at long run, against carnal policy; by keeping the commandments we secure God on our side, and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve to ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. 2. He outstript his teachers, and had more understanding than them all. He means either those that would have been his teachers, that blamed his conduct, and undertook to prescribe to him: by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters, so that it appeared in the event, he had taken the right measures, and they had taken the wrong. Or, those that should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites that sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but they neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or, those that had been his teachers when he was young, he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid, that,

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with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had *spiritual senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. 3. He outdid the ancients: either those of his day, he was younger, like Elihu, and they were very old; but his keeping God's precepts taught him more wisdom than the multitude of their years, Job xxxii. 7, 8. Or those of former days: he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients of the church: and the sacred writings kept and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: *I have refrained my feet from the evil ways* they were ready to slip aside into. I checked myself and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation. Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foregoing the end of that way. And his care was universal, he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*, Psal. xvii. 4.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty, that *I may keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, 1. An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word, and had made that his rule. 2. It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercise of his religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any by-way.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had not departed from God's judgments, he had not chose any other rule but the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity.

2. The cause of his constancy; *for thou hast taught me*, i. e. they were divine instructions that I learned; I was instructed in the doctrine of God, and therefore I stuck to it. Or rather, it was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions. All the fruits and taught of God, for he it is that gives the mind understanding and holiness, and those only that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yet sweeter than honey to my mouth. 104. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God: it was *sweet to his taste, yet sweeter than honey*. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savor and relish in divine things; such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience as we cannot give to others. We have heard him ourselves, John iv. 42. To this scripture taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace; no pleasure was comparable to it.

2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God: 1. It helped him to a good heart; *Through thy precepts I get understanding*, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life, or in a testing others. 2. That helped him to a good heart; therefore because I have got understanding of the truth, *I hate every false way*, and am steadfastly resolved not to turn aside into it. Observe here, That the way of sin is a false way; it doth deceive, and will ruin all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Prov. xiv. 12. That is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it, ver. 101. but he hates it, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. That those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, not every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the word of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for to depart from evil, that is understanding, Job xvii. 23. and the more ready we are in the scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

14. N U N.

105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a lamp and a light, it discovers to us that concerning God and ourselves, which otherwise we could not have known: it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous: it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it: it is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Prov. vi. 23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the spirit, it is like the lamps in the sanctuary and the pillar of fire to Israel.

2. The use we should make of it. It must not only be a light to our eyes, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a light to our feet and to our path, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation, both in the choice of our way in general, and in the particular steps we take in that way; that we may not take a false way, nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light, when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

4 C

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Here is, 1. The notion David had of religion; it is *keeping God's righteous judgments*. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are *righteous judgments*, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself by his own promise to that which he was already bound to do by the divine precept, and all little enough. *I have sworn*, I have lift up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back: and therefore must go forward, *I will perform it*. Note, 1. It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse if we do not perform it. 2. We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. 3. We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths; an honest man will be as good as his word; nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. The remonstrance David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in; *I am afflicted very much*; afflicted in spirit, he seems to mean that especially; he laboured under many discouragements, without were fightings, within were fears, this is often the lot of the best of saints, therefore think it not strange, if sometimes it be ours.

2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace, *Quicken me O Lord*, make me lively, make me cheerful, quicken me by thy afflictions to greater diligence in my work, *quicken me*, i. e. deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead. He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it, *quicken me according to thy word*. David resolved to perform his promises to God, ver. 106. and therefore could with humble boldness beg of God to make good his word to him.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the free will-offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them; this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of, is the *free will-offerings*, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises, *the calves of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. *the fruit of our lips*, Heb. xiii. 15. these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be *free-will offerings*, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully; and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them; *Teach me thy judgments*. We cannot offer any thing to God that we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of, and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us, as for the favour of God towards us.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is 1. David in danger of losing his life. This is but a step between him and death, for the *wicked have laid a snare* for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for that was it they aimed at, what they could not effect by open force, they hoped to compass by treachery; which made him say, *My soul is continually in my hand*: it was not so only as a man, so it is true of us all, wherever we are, we lie exposed to the strokes of death; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched away from us by violence, or (if sandy, as our life is) it easily of itself slips through our fingers, but, as a man of war, a soldier that often jeopardied his life in the high places of the field; and especially as a man after God's own heart, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and always delivered to death, 2 Cor. ix. 11. *killed all the day long*.

2. David in no danger of losing his religion for all this. Thus in jeopardy every hour, and yet constant to God and his duty, none of these things move him; for, 1. He *doth not forget the law*, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever, and where that dwells richly it will be a *well of living water*. 2. He hath not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had sinned many a shock and kept his ground, and sure that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

111. Thy testimonies I have taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicings of my heart: 112. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

The psalmist here in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God, and to live and die by it.

1. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it: *Thy testimonies*, the truths, the promises of thy word, *have I taken as an heritage for ever*, for they are the rejoicing of my heart: the present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were in his account the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. 1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies; the covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as an *heritage for ever*. If he could not yet say, *they are my heritage*, yet he could say, I have made choice of them for my heritage; and will never take up with a *portion in this life*, Pfalm xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are an heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, *if children, then heirs*; they are an *heritage for ever*, and that no earthly heritage is, 1 Pet. i. 4. all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore take up with a little of this world. 2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in

them; *They are the rejoicing of my heart*, because they will be *my heritage for ever*. It requireth the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God, and not in the possession of this world.

2. He resolves to govern himself by it, and thence to take his measures: *I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes*. They that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, 1. With full consent and complacency; *I have*, by the grace of God, *inclined my heart to it*, and conquered the aversion I had to it. A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. 2. With constancy and perseverance: He would perform God's statutes alway, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this is to the end, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. S A M E C H.

113. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Here is, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it: *I hate vain thoughts*. He doth not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God; vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they not only divert the mind from that which is good but open the door to all evil, Jer. iv. 14. Though David could not say he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say *he hated them*, he did not countenance them or give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. *The evil I do, I allow not*.

2. David's delight in the rule of duty: but *thy law do I love*, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the master of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that we love.

114. Thou art my hiding-place, and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Here is (1.) God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforts himself with, when his enemies were very malicious against him; *Thou art my hiding-place, and my shield*. David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter. In war he guarded himself with his shield, now God was both these to him: a hiding-place to preserve him from danger, and a shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection: He is their *strength and their shield*, their *help and their shield*; their *sure and their shield*; their *shield and their great reward*; and here, their *hiding-place, and their shield*. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

(2.) David's confidence in God; he is safe, and therefore he is easy under the divine protection. I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me. They who depend on God's promise, shall have the benefit of his power, and be taken under his special protection.

115. Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life; *I will keep the commandments of my God*. Bravely resolved, like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin, and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so. *I will keep them*. Whatever others do, this will I do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil doers and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good.

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to his resolution; *depart from me, ye evil-doers*. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such even about court, intruding near his person, these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must have no society with evil-doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do, nor do as they would have us do, Pfalm i. 1. Eph. v. 11.

116. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope. 117. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice: *Uphold me*, and again, *Hold thou me up*. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin, unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, Pfalm xli. 12. to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no further than he carries us.

2. He pleads earnestly for his grace. (1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it: *Uphold me according to thy word*, which word I hope in; and if it be not performed, I shall be made *ashamed of my hope*, and be called a fool for my credulity. But they that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed.

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him: *Uphold me, that I may live*; intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but supported by his hand he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained, and be an earnest

of eternal life. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe*; out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is on divine supports.
(3.) He pleads his resolution in the strength of this grace to proceed in his duty; *Hold me up, and then I will have respect unto thy statutes continually*, and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them. *I will employ myself, so some; I will delight myself, so others; in thy statutes.* If God's right hand uphold us, we must in his strength go on in our duty, both with diligence and with pleasure.

118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. 119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Here is, 1. God's judgment on wicked people, on those that *wander from his statutes*, that take their measures from other rules, and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are the *wicked of the earth*, they mind earthly things, and lay up their treasures in the earth, and live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them, nor envy them. 1. He *treads them all down*; he brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are never so high, he can bring them low, *Amos ii. 9.* he has done it many a time, and he will do it; for he resists the proud, and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but sooner or later he will trample upon them. 2. He *puts them all away like dross*. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous, than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous, *Matt. xiii. 49.* so that they shall have no place in their congregation, *Psalms i. 5.* which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes in this world the wicked are by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, *put away as dross*, *Prov. xxv. 4, 5.*

2. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off, because they *err from his statutes*; they that will not submit to the commands of the word, shall feel the curses of it. And because *their deceit is falsehood*, i. e. because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from; and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. *Their cunning is falsehood*, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness: this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

3. The improvement David made of these judgments; he took notice of them, and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase, 1. His love to the word of God; I see what comes of sin, *therefore I love thy testimonies*, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses, and *keep me from the paths of the destroyer*. We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. 2. His fear of the wrath of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee*. Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure, he humbleth himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people, should make us, (1.) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him; *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* 1 Sam. vi. 20. (2.) To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord; especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered, and *put away as dross*.

16. A I N.

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. 122. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God.

1. As his witness, that he had not done wrong: he could truly say, *I have done judgment and justice*, i. e. I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right. Take him as a king, he *executeth judgment and justice to all his people*, 2 Sam. viii. 15. take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself, that *there was no evil or transgression in his hand*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy, and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his judge, that he might not be wronged; he having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice, and avenge him of his adversaries. *Be surety for thy servant for good*, i. e. undertake for me against those that would run me down, and ruin me. He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him: Christ is our surety with God; and if he be so, providence shall be our surety against all the world; who or what shall harm us, if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He doth not prescribe to God what he should do for him, only let it be *for good*, in such way and manner as infinite wisdom sees best; only let me not be left to mine oppressors. Though David had *done judgment and justice*, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him: and in that hope he prayed again, *Let not the proud oppress me*. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off: the condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

David being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly: *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation*. His eyes were towards it, and had been long so: he looked for help from heaven, and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men to be weary of waiting God's time, when their time is lapsed.

2. Yet he cannot but hope that it comes surely; for he expects the *word of God's righteousness*, and no other salvation but what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word doth not; and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction: *Teach me thy statutes*. Give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me: Now I am afflicted, oppressed, and *mine eyes ready to fail for thy salvation*, let me know what my duty is in this condition. In difficult times, we should desire more to be told what we must do, than what we may expect; and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture precepts, than of scripture prophecies. If God that gave us his statutes do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches is implied in the next petition. *Give me understanding*, a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light, *that I may know thy testimonies*. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those that know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His plea to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him: *Deal with me according to thy mercy*. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing: let me have it according to thy mercy; for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are then most likely to be easy, when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God: *I am thy servant, and have work to do for thee, therefore teach me to do it, and to do it well*. The servant hath reason to expect, that if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. Lord, said David, I desire to serve thee, shew me how. If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, *John vii. 17.* *Psalms xxv. 14.*

126. It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked: David having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God. Lord, there are those that *have made void thy law*, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands. They that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do, in effect, *make void the law*, saying, *Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty that we should fear him?* It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment: would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin, and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A desire that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work*, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens. God's time to work is when vice is become most daring and the measure of iniquity is full: *Now will I arise, faith the Lord*. Some read it, and the original will bear it, *It is time to work for thee, O Lord*; it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and after all we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

David here, as often in this psalm, professeth the great love he had to the word and law of God; and to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

1. The degrees of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money; *above gold, yea, above fine gold*. Gold, fine gold, is what the most of men set their hearts upon, nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so as gold doth; it is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes: they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it: but David saw that the word of God answers all things better than money doth; for it enricheth the soul towards God, and therefore he loved it better than gold, for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

2. The ground of his love. Therefore he loved all God's commandments, because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them, and therefore we must love them, because they bear God's image, and are the revelations of his will. If we thus *consent to the law that it is good*, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

3. The fruit and evidence of this love. *He hated every false way*. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts that are right, is a false way, and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

17. P E.

129. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here, how David was affected towards the word of God. 1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself: *Thy testimonies are wonderful*. The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful: its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful: and it is a sign we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He

2. He adhered to it, as of constant use to him: *Therefore doth my soul keep them*, as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without. We do not keep them to any purpose, unless our souls keep them; there they must be deposited, as the tables of testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. They that see God's word to be admirable, will prize it highly, and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130. The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1. The great use for which the word of God was intended: to give light, that is, to give understanding: to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understandings of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place.

2. Its efficacy for this purpose; it answers the end to admiration: for, 1. *Even the entrance of God's word gives light.* If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find, that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising, and yet satisfying, discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see, when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths the milk appointed for the babes, brings a great light into the soul, much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. The exposition or explication of thy word giveth light; then it is most profitable, when ministers do their part in giving the sense, Neh. viii. 3. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality. 2. It would give understanding even to the simple, to the weakest capacities; for it sheweth us a way to heaven so plain, that the *wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

131. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The desire David had towards the work of God. *I longed for thy commandments.* When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances, he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances, he greedily sucked in the word of God, as *new-born babes desire the milk.* When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

2. The degree of that desire appearing in the expressions of it: *I opened my mouth and panted*; as one overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be towards God, and the remembrance of his name, *Psalm. xlii. 1, 2. Luke xii. 50.*

132. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is 1. David's request for God's favour to himself. *Look graciously upon me*, let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance; take cognizance of me and my affairs, *and be merciful to me*; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy, and receive the gifts of thy mercy. See how humble his petition is; he asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he doth not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people. *As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* Which speaks either, 1. A plea for mercy: Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so: and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people? Or, 2. A description of the favour and mercy he desired, that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen, *Psalm. cxi. 4, 5.* He desires no more, no better than neighbours fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him; which are such as *eye hath not seen*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with them that love him are such, that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with; for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than he useth to deal with those that love him, we have no reason to complain, 1 Cor. x. 13.

133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is in this verse as earnest for the good work of God in him, as in the verse before for the good will of God towards him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty: *Order my steps in thy word.* Having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the conduct of thy grace. We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God, that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin, *Let no iniquity have dominion over me*, so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer, *Rom. vi. 14. Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: - so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays, that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious. *Deliver me from the oppression of man*; man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited, let them know themselves to be but men. *Psalm ix. 20.* and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.

2. He promised that then he would live in all godliness and honesty. Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear: *So will I keep thy precepts.* Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression: But so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully, and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed. Then we may expect temporal blessings

when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king: now here, as became a good servant,

1. He is very ambitious of his master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chiefest good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but *make thy face to shine upon thy servant*, i. e. let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day; if the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile.

2. He is very solicitous about his Master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern: this he would be instructed in that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.

Here we have David in sorrow.

1. It is a great sorrow; to that degree, that he weeps *rivers of tears*; commonly where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye; in conformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour, *ver. 135.* now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and they that do so shall be comforted, *Isa. lxi. 3.*

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour to God, *because they kept not the law.* Either *because mine eyes keep not thy law*, so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye. Or rather, *they*, i. e. those about me, *ver. 139.* Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. T Z A D D I.

137. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. 138. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.

Here is, 1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature: as he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him: there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he doth all according to it.

2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did or ever can do any wrong to any of his creatures. *Upright are thy judgments*, the promises, and threatening of executions of both: every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause, and will judge accordingly.

3. The righteousness of his commands, which he hath given to be the rule of our obedience. *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded*, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceeding righteous and faithful; righteousness and faithfulness itself. As he acts like himself, for his law requires that we may act alike ourselves, and like him; that we be just to ourselves and to all that we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous, that which we are commanded to believe is faithful: it is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139. My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here is, 1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion: *Mine enemies have forgotten thy words.* They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them; not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God, they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give a check to their sinful courses.

2. The great concern which godly men shew for religion. David reckoned these his enemies that forgot the words of God, because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness, as even preyed upon his spirits, even *eat them up*, as Christ's zeal, *John. ii. 17.* swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. *My zeal has pressed or constrained me*; so Dr. Hammond reads it, *Acts xviii. 5.* Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are, the better we should be.

140. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God: *Thy servant loves it.* Every good man, being a good servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will, and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace, there is a dear love to the word of God.

2. The ground and reason of that affection: he saw it *very pure*, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity; because it bears the image of God's holiness, and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness: it commands purity, and as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so if we receive it in the light and love of it, it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141. I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here

Here is, 1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet *small and despised* in his own account, and in the account of many others. Men's real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it exposed them many times to the scorn of some, and always makes them low in their own eyes. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

2. David poor, and yet pious; *small and despised* for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he did *not forget God's precepts*. He will not throw off his religion, though it expose him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are *small and despised*, we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is *righteousness*, and it is an *everlasting righteousness*; it is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God, that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God; we are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man; here is truth brought to the understanding, there to fit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man. But, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will, and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law, *John xviii. 37. and God's law is the truth*; here we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement.

1. He again professed his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said, *ver. 141. I am small and despised*, and yet stick to my duty; here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so. *Trouble and anguish hath taken hold on me*: trouble without, anguish within, those surprised him, they seized him; they held him: Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears, they are in *heaviness through manifold temptations*. There he had said, *yet do I not forget thy precepts*; here he carries his constancy much higher: *yet thy commandments are my delights*. All his trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste to the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them, and find that peace and pleasure in them, which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have many times the sweetest enjoyment of, when they are in trouble and anguish, *2 Cor. i. 5.*

2. He again acknowledgeth the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before, *ver. 142. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting*, and cannot be altered; and when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, a *well of living water*, *John iv. 14.* We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, 1. His prayer for grace: *Give me understanding*. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He doth not say, give me a further revelation, but *give me a further understanding*; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. 2. His hope of glory. Give me this renewed understanding, and then *I shall live*; shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted for the present in the prospect of it. *This is life eternal to know God*, *John xvii. 3.*

19. K O P H.

145. I cried with my whole heart, hear me O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. 146. I cried unto thee, save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, (1.) That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed *with his heart*, and the prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour. (2.) He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection, and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. He *cried with his whole heart*, all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. (3.) That he directed his prayer to God: *I cried unto thee*. Whither should the child go but to his father, when any thing ails him? (4.) That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: *Save me*. A short prayer; for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking; but a comprehensive prayer; not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy. We need desire no more but *God's salvation*, *Psalm i. 23.* and the things that accompany it, *Heb. vi. 9.* (5.) That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them, *Psalm v. 3.* Lord, hear me, and let me know that thou hearest me.

2. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty, when he was in the pursuit of mercy. *I will keep thy statutes*; I am resolved by thy grace I will: for if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, *Prov. xxviii. 9.* This purpose is used to an humble plea, *ver. 146. Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations*, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may keep thy

testimonies. We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. 148. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage; he cried unto God, *i. e.* offered up to him his pious and devout affection with all seriousness. Observe,

1. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayer, and were helpful to them, were, (1.) Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come presently. I cried and hoped that at last I should speed, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie*. *I hoped in thy word*, which I knew would not fail me. (2.) Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language, and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

2. The hours of his devotion; he prevented the dawning of the morning; nay, the night watches. See here, 1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, *Yet a little sleep*. 2. That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray; when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn; even in the night watches, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him and go to sleep again. *He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose*, which we can as ill want as our food, *Job xxiii. 12.* 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

149. Hear my voice according unto thy loving kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, 1. David applies himself to God for grace and comfort, with much solemnity. He begs of God to *hear his voice*: Lord I have something to say to thee, shall I obtain a gracious audience? Well, what has he to say? what is his petition, and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little; *Lord quicken me*; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act.

2. He encourageth himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends, 1. Upon God's loving kindness. He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His loving kindness manifested to me, will help to quicken me, and put life into me. 2. Upon God's judgment, *i. e.* his wisdom. He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me. Or his promise, the word which he hath spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant; *quicken me, according to the tenor of that covenant*.

150. They draw nigh, that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. 151. Thou art near, O LORD, and all thy commandments are truth.

Here is, 1. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies, (1.) They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs; they *follow after mischief*; any mischief they could do to David or his friends, they would let slip no opportunity, nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt. (2.) They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes: *They are far from thy law*; setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself, we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. (3.) They followed him close, and he was just ready to fall into their hands: *They draw nigh*, nigher than they were, so that they got ground of him: they were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said, *1 Sam. xx. 3. There is but a step between them and death*. Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, *ver. 149.* God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him we may wrestle for a blessing.

2. The assurance David had of protection with God. *They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near, O Lord, to save me*; not only mightier than they, and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they and therefore ready to help. It is the happiness of the saints that when trouble is near God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, *Deut. iv. 7. All thy commandments are truth*. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power, they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old, that thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses. *All thy commandments are truth*; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity; such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things that it cannot but be sure: The promises are *founded for ever*, so that when heaven and earth are passed away, every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, *2 Cor. i. 20.*

2. David had found it so; both by a work of God's grace upon his heart, begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word, and enabling

him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction; and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he *knew of old*, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God and trusted in him, will own that they have found him faithful.

20. R E S H.

153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

Here, 1. David prays for succour in distress. *Is any afflicted? let him pray; let him pray as David doth here.* (1.) He hath an eye to God's pity, and prays, *Consider mine affliction*; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to *put him in remembrance*, Isa. xliii. 26. to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. (2.) He has an eye to God's power, and prays, *deliver me*; and again *deliver me*. Consider my troubles and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance, *Psal.* l. 15. and we may pray for it with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. (3.) He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays *Plead my cause*: Be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client: David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them: he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it speedily, *Isa.* li. 22. *Jer.* l. 34. (4.) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, *Quicken me*. Lord I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles: my spirit is apt to droop and sink: O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!

2. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to his conduct. *Quicken and deliver me, according to thy word*, of promise, *for I do not forget thy precepts*. The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule, and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

155. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, 1. The description of wicked men; they do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, or in the least endeavoured to do it. These are wicked indeed, that do not think the law of God worth inquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it; being resolved to live at large, and to walk in the way of their heart.

2. Their doom. *Salvation is far from them*. They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance; *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*. How can they expect to seek God's favour with success when they are in adversity, that never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and they are going to heaven: but they are mistaken, it is far from them, they thrust it from them, by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin, the farther it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not: *Behold the judge stands before the door*.

156. Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

Here, 1. David admires God's grace. *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord*. The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints: his mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion: they are many, they are great, it is a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, *ver.* 154. but God is good for all that; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not despised the riches of those mercies. They that are delivered from the sinner's doom, are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving quickening grace, *according to his judgments*, i. e. according to the tenor of the new covenant, that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace. Or according to this manner, his custom or usage with those that love his name, *ver.* 132.

157. Many are my persecutors, and mine enemies: yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers. *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies*. When Saul, the king, was his persecutor and enemy, no marvel that many more were so; multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David being a public person had many enemies, but withal he had many friends that loved him and wished him well, let him set the one over against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors of both are many, very many.

2. David established in the way of his duty notwithstanding. *Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies*, as knowing that while I stick to them, God is for me; and then no matter who is against me. A man that is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved: because they kept not thy word.

Here is, (1.) David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He beheld the transgressors, those whose sins were open before all men, and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be

a grief to those that have any regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

(2.) The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God; *They kept not thy word*. They that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving kindness.

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts: Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name. He doth not say, consider how I fulfil thy precepts, he was conscious to himself, that in many things he came short, but consider how I love them: And our obedience is then only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon; quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive; not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, *but according to thy loving kindness*; it is to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's *loving kindness* will quicken us.

160. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it. *It is true from the beginning*. Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men, all he said was true, and to be trusted. The church from its beginning was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by track of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, (*Quod initio non valet tractu temporis convalescit.*) But the beginning of God's word was true, so some read it; his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love have found every saying in it *faithful and well worthy of all acceptation*.

3. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous; every one of thy judgments endureth for ever unalterable, and of perpetual obligation, and reading men's everlasting doom.

21. S C H I N.

161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know,

1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man: *Princes persecuted him*. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bid him *go serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. It hath been the common lot of the best men, to be persecuted; and the case is the worse, if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and colour of justice. It is sad, that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But *marvel not at the matter*, Ecclef. v. 8. It was comfort to David that when princes persecuted him, he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God. They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but *my heart stands in awe of thy word*, and I was resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased, and falls out with me. Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, or the authority of its precepts, and the terror of threatenings; and to those that do so, nothing appears in the power and wrath of man at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, *Luke* xii. 4, 5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word, is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light, when other nations sat in darkness; that he was himself let into the understanding of it, and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said, that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here that he rejoiced in it; the more reverence we have for the word of God, the more joy we shall find in it.

2. The degree of that pleasure, *as one that findeth great spoil*. This supposeth a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to rejoice in God's word. But besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163. I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul: if those be fixed right, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed right in David.

1. He had rooted antipathy to sin, he could not endure to think of it: *I hate and abhor lying*; which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God, and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying in commerce or conversation is a sin, which every good man hates and abhors, hates, and double hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates, one is a *lying tongue*, and another is a *false witness*, that *speaketh lies*, *Prov.* vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told him: but we should more hate telling a lie, because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God. *Thy law do I love*. And therefore he *abhorred lying*, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God;

God; and the reason why he loved the law of God, was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth, the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

David in this psalm is full of complaints, yet those did neither jumble out his praises, nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in, he doth not want matter for praise, and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

2. How often David praised God. *Seven times a day*, i. e. very frequently: not only every day, but often every day. Many think once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God *seven times a day* at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in.

We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God *seven times a day*, for the subject can never be exhausted, and our affections should never be tired. See ver. 62.

2. What he praised God for; *because of thy righteous judgments*. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, that are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, that make it their rule, and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy and have a holy serenity; none enjoy themselves more than they do. *Great peace have they that love thy law*, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty, and pleasure in reflection upon it. *The work of righteousness is peace*, Isa. xxxii. 17. such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without, and yet enjoy great peace within; *for his law is their peace*. They that love the world have great vexation, for it doth not answer their expectation; they that love God's word, have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security; *nothing shall offend them*; nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumbling block to them, to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God, shall enable them, both to hold fast their integrity, and preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God doth. *Nothing shall offend or hurt them*, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they shall reconcile themselves to it. They, in whom this holy love reigns, will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 6. 7.

166. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: *LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation*, not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for that as my happiness, and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burdens in it.

2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule. *I have done thy commandments*, i. e. I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot upon good grounds hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments, ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation: and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and I love them exceedingly. 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

David's conscience here witnesseth for him.

1. That his practices were good. (1.) He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be superlative love, we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world, and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and extirpate carnal affections. (2.) He kept them, his soul kept them; and bodily exercise profits little in religion, we must make heart-work of it, or make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the Spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them.

2. That he was governed herein by a good principle; therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thine eye always upon me, *all my ways are before thee*; thou knowest every step I take, and strictly observe all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss. Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, Gen. xvii. 1.

22. T A U.

169. Let my cry come near before thee O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A general petition for audience repeated: *Let my cry come near before thee*; and again, *let my supplication come before thee*. He calls his

prayer his cry, which notes the fervency and vehemence of it, and his supplication, which notes the humility of it; we must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, i. e. that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers, and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer, that his supplication might come before God, implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us, Jer. iii. 4.

2. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present. (1.) That God by his grace would give him wisdom to carry himself well under his troubles. *Give me understanding*, he means that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way; give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee. (2.) That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles. *Deliver me*, i. e. with the temptation make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. The same general plea to enforce these requests, *according to thy word*. This directs and limits his desires: Lord give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised, I ask for no other. It also encourageth his faith and expectation; Lord, that which I pray for, is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?

171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him *his statutes*. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and now he is drawing towards the close on the Psalm, he speaks of it as taken for granted. They that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident, that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him.

2. The grateful sense he promiseth to have of that favour: *My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me*. (1.) The heart shall have cause to praise God, those that are taught of God, have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all their spiritual blessings which are the best blessings, and the most precious. (2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to it. All that are taught of God, are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may then forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) Therefore is this importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. They that pray for God's grace, must aim at God's glory, Eph. i. 12.

172. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Observe here, (1.) The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well that he was ready to own it the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness. (2.) The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge: *My tongue shall speak of thy word*; Not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others; as that which he was himself full of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments, the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so as never to forget it by sinful speaking or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject matter of our discourse, that it may feed many, and minister grace to the hearers.

173. Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts. 174. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD: and thy law is my delight.

Here, 1. David prays that divine grace would work for him: *Let thine hand help me*. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God, in hopes that the hand that had made him, would help him; for if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power, and his bounty.

2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads: 1. That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice; *I have chosen thy precepts*. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because upon trial I knew no better. These are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good not by chance, but of choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts, may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services, and under all their sufferings.

2. That his heart was upon heaven; *I have longed for thy salvation*. David when he was got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, It is good to be here; but still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forwards in their way to it.

3. That he took pleasure in doing his duty; *Thy law is my delight*. Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world. Those that are cheerful in their obedience, may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience; and those that expect God's salvation, must take delight in his law, and their hopes must increase their delight.

175. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee: and let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God; and therefore, 1. He prays that God would give him time to praise him. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, i. e. let my life be prolonged that I may live to thy glory. The reason why a good man desires to live is, that he may praise God in the

the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family; but let me live, that in doing this I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition. When we die, we hope to go to a better world to praise him; and that is more agreeable for us, but here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. *Let my soul live*, i. e. Let me be sanctified and comforted, these are the life of the soul, and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; *Let thy judgments help me*, i. e. let all ordinances and all providences (both are God's judgments) further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, and let them help to fit me for that work.

176. I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant: for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession; *I have gone astray*, or wandered up and down *like a lost sheep*. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep, *Luke xv. 4.* so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, *Matth. xviii. 12, 13.* We are apt to wander like the sheep, and very unapt when we have gone astray to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures, and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

2. A believing petition; *seek thy servant*, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, *Ezek. xxxiv. 12.* Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray; for David had been himself a tender shepherd. Lord, own me, for one of thine, for though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providence; bring me back by thy grace. *Seek me*, that is, *find me*: for God never seeks in vain. *Turn me*, and I shall be turned.

3. An obedient plea; though I have gone astray, yet have I not wickedly departed, *I do not forget thy commandments*. Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin, and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here, (1.) It is the character of good people, that they do not forget God's commandments; being well pleased with their convictions, and well settled in their resolutions. (2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, yet cannot but own, that they have in many instances wandered from it. (3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, yet if they continue mindful of it, may with an humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

P S A L M CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen, which are here put together under the title of songs of degrees; It is well it is not material, what the meaning of that title should be, for nothing is offered towards the explication of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Four of them are expressly ascribed to David, and one said to be designed for Solomon, and perhaps penned by him; yet *Psalm cxxvii. and cxxix.* seems to be of a much later date; some of them are calculated for the closet, as *Psalm cxx. cxxx.* some for the family, as *Psalm cxxvii. cxxviii.* some for the public assembly, as *Psalm cxxii. cxxxiv.* and some occasional, as *Psalm cxxv. cxxxii.* So that it should seem they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture that they are so called from their singular excellency; as the song of songs, so the song of degrees, is a most excellent song, in the highest degree. Others, from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments they were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing of them; Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others, as so many stages of the people's journey, when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short psalms, all but one very short, three of them have but three verses a piece, and that they are placed next to *Psalm cxix.* which is by much the longest of all; Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short were sometimes sung altogether, and made as it were one psalm, observing only a pause between each; as many steps may make one pair of stairs. 2. That in the composition of them we frequently meet with the figure they call climax, or an ascent; the preceding word repeated, and then rising to something further, as *Psalm cxx.* With him that hated peace, I peace. *Psalm cxvi.* From whence cometh my help, my help cometh. He that keepeth thee shall not slumber, he that keepeth Israel. *Psalm cxxii.* Within thy gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem is builded. *Psalm cxviii.* Until that he have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us. And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps for one of these reasons they are called songs of degrees.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon occasion of Doeg's accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like *Psalm lvi.* which was penned on that occasion; and because the psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. 1. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischief designed him by false and malicious tongues, ver. 1, 2. 2. He threatens the judgments of God against such, ver. 3, 4. 3. He complains of his ill neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, ver. 5—7. In singing this psalm we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at any time we fall unjustly under the lash of it, that better than we have smarted for it.

A song of degrees.

1. **I**N my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. 2. Deliver my soul, O LORD from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 3. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? 4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Here is, 1. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer; David records his own experience of this.

(1.) He was brought into distress, into great distress, by *lying lips*, and a *deceitful tongue*. There were those that sought his ruin and had almost ef-

fects it by lying. 1. By telling lies to him: They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely and without suspicion carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, then when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips. 2. By telling lies of him; they forged false accusations against him, and *laid to his charge things that he knew not*.

This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent ones of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by the calumnies in conversation, but their lives and all that is dear to them in this world endangered by false witness-bearing in judgment. David was here in a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

(2.) In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer; *I cried unto the Lord*. Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can when he pleaseth bridle their tongues. His prayer was, *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin. He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying, *Psalm cxix. 29.* and hated it so heartily in himself, ver. 163. might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

(3.) He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer; God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their design very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be the protector of his people from lying lips, *Psalm xxxvii. 6.*

2. The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, ver. 3, 4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, *Psalm xii. 3, 7.* The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening his conscience, if he have any left: Consider what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, *thou false tongue*. Surely sinners durst not do as they do, if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them: *Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper*, i. e. they will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, *Psalm lvi. 7. God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded*. They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are *sharp arrows*, and *arrows of the mighty*, the Almighty; for they will pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, *Job. vi. 4.* and his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which do not flame or crackle like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long; some say, a year round, even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie, shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, *Rev. xxii. 15.*

5. Wo is me that sojourn in Mesek, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. 6. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven; and some apply the two foregoing verses to this; what shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that lie open to it? What shall a man get by living among such malicious, deceitful men? Nothing but *sharp arrows*, and *coals of juniper*, i. e. all the mischiefs of a false and spiteful tongue, *Psalm lvi. 4. Wo is me*, faith David, that I am forced to dwell among such, that *I sojourn in Mesek and Kedar*. Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesek and Kedar; we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesek and Kedar; as when we would describe an ill neighbourhood, we say, we dwell among Turks and heathens: this made him cry out, *Wo is me!*

1. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God: While he was in banishment, he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God's altars, and cries out, *Wo is me*, that my sojourning is prolonged! that I cannot get home to my resting place, but am still kept at a distance, to some read it. Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God's ordinances, and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God, to want the means of grace, and of communion with God; when they are under a force of that kind, they cannot but cry out, as David here, *Wo is me!*

2. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were upon many accounts, troublesome to him. He dwelt in the tents of Kedar, where the shepherds were, probably, in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burthen to a good man to be cast into, and kept in the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from; like Lot in Sodom, *2 Pet. ii. 8.* and to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing, and scratching, and tearing, and that will shew the old enmity that is in the seed of the serpent, against the seed of the woman. Those that David dwelt with were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and proclaimed war with it; who might write on their weapons of war, not *sic sequimur pacem*, but *sic persequimur*. Perhaps Saul's court was the Mesek and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he means that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige, and could not; but the more service he did him, the more exasperated he was against him.

See here, (1.) The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he were a man of war, *I am for peace*; for living peaceably with all men, and unpeaceably with none, *I peace*, so it is in the original; I love peace, and pursue peace; my disposition is to peace, and my delight is in it: I pray for peace; and strive for peace, will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing, in reason, for peace. *I am for peace*, and have made it to appear that I am so. *The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable*.

(2.) The character of the worst of bad men in David's enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed. *When I speak they are for war*; and the more forward for war, the more they find me inclined to peace. He spoke with all the respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation, spoke reason, spoke love, but

but they would not so much as hear him patiently: but cried out, To arms, to arms; for fierce and implacable were they, and so bent to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies; for his love they were his adversaries, and for good words, and good works, they stoned him, and if we meet with such enemies we must not think it strange, nor lose peace the less for our looking it in vain. *Be not overcome with evil, no net of such evil as this, but even when thus tried, still try to overcome evil with good.*

P S A L M CXXI.

Some call this the soldiers psalm, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was jeoparding his life in the high places of the field, and thus trust d God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it the traveller's psalm, (for there is nothing in it of military dangers) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it, proventiento, for a good man's convey and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need not thus appropriate it: wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm direct and encourageth us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection, and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction in singing this psalm. 1. David here assures himself of help from God, ver. 1, 2. 2. He assures others of it, ver. 3--8.

A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **I** Will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. 2. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. 6. The sun shall not smite thee by day: nor the moon by night. 7. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. 8. The LORD shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm teacheth us,

1. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power, and a God all sufficient for us. David did so, and found the benefit of it. (1.) We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes nor make flesh our arm. *Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? so some read it. Doth my help come from thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth; upon the strength of the hills; upon princes and great men, that like hills fill the earth, and mount their heads towards heaven? No: In vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer. iii. 23. I never expect help to come from them, my confidence is in God only. We must lift up our eyes above the hills, so some read it: we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us that they are.* (2.) We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come. *My help comes from the Lord; the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time; if he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt.* (3.) We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions. *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, probably, he means the hills on which the temple was built, mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant is, the oracle, and the altars; I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people, his presence by promise, and not only to his common presence. When he was at a distance he would look towards the sanctuary, Psalm xxviii. 2. —xlii. 6. from thence cometh our help; from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. My help cometh from the Lord, so the word is, ver. 2. from before the Lord, or from the sight and presence of the Lord, "Which (saith Dr. Hammond) may refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the deity being inseparably united, God is always present "with him, and through him with us, for whom sitting at God's right "hand he constantly maketh intercession." Christ is called the angel of his presence, that saved his people. Isa. lxiii. 9. (4.) We must encourage our confidence in God with this, that he made heaven and earth, and he that did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word's speaking, in a little time, and all very good, very excellent and beautiful; and therefore how great soever our straits and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleaseth for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleaseth from hurting his people.*

2. To comfort ourselves in God, when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised, that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, not only evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction, but what God sees good for us, and will do us good by.

(1.) God himself hath undertaken to be our protector. *The Lord is thy keeper, ver. 5.* Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. Those must needs be well kept that have the Lord for their keeper; if by affliction they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper.

(2.) The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. *He that keepeth Israel, ver. 4. is thy keeper, ver. 5.* The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.

(3.) He is a wakeful, watchful keeper. *He that keepeth Israel, that keepeth thee, O Israelite, shall neither slumber nor sleep; he never did, nor ever will, for he is never weary: he doth not only not sleep, but he doth not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep.*

(4.) He doth not only protect those whom he is the keeper of, but he refresheth them. *He is their shield.* The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being that is infinite substance, is what he is: that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promiseth to be their umbrage, their shadow, to keep as close to them, as the shadow doth to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the shadow of a great

rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxii. 2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, Cant. ii. 3.

(5.) He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; he is their keeper, and shade on their right hand; so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them, and succeed them, Psalm xvi. 8.

(6.) He is not only at their right hand, but he will also keep the feet of his saints, 1 Sam. ii. 9. He will have an eye upon them in their motions; he will not suffer thy foot to be moved: God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it, Psalm lxxiii. 2—23. shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud, or overthrow them by force: He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble, and are ready to fall.

(7.) He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies, ver. 6. *The sun shall not smite thee, with his heat, by day, nor the moon, with her cold and moisture, by night.* The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet, (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon (though worshipped by a great part of mankind) are often instruments of hurt and disorder to human bodies; God by them often smites us; but his favour still interpose so, that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them night and day, Isa. xxvii. 3. as he kept Israel in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud by day, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and of fire by night, which probably diffused a gentle warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night; their father Jacob having complained, Gen. xxxi. 10. that by day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night. It may be understood figuratively; then shall not be hurt either by the open assaults of thine enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun; or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night.

(8.) His protection will make them safe in every respect. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the evil of sin, and the evil of trouble.* He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove or lighten the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil, 2 Cor. xii. 7. and so far from suffering evil, as that whatever affliction happens to thee, there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills shall not hurt.

(9.) It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection. *He shall preserve thy soul.* All souls are his, and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them that they be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

(10.) He will keep us in all our ways. *He shall preserve thy going out and coming in.* Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward-bound or homeward bound, as he keeps Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest: going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in, Psalm civ. 20.

(11.) He will continue his care over us, from this time forth and even for evermore. It is a protection for life, never out of date. He will be thy guide even unto death, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom. God will protect his church and his saints always, even to the end of the world. The Spirit, which is their preserver and comforter, shall abide them for ever.

P S A L M CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David's time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this among other means was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, 1. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. 2. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, ver. 3—5. 3. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, ver. 6—9. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to the gospel church, which is called the Jerusalem that is from above.

A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID.

1. **I** Was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the LORD. 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment: the thrones of the house of David.

Here is, 1. The pleasure which David, and other pious Israelites, took in approaching to, and attending upon God in public ordinances, ver. 1, 2.

(1.) The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say, that he was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord. Note, 1. It is the will of God that we should worship him in comfort; that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough, we must go into the house of the Lord, to pay our homage to him there, and not forsake the assembling ourselves together. 2. We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another to go to worship God in public. *Let us go; not do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home, but we will go also, Zech. viii. 21.* not do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure; or we will go first and you shall come after us; but let us go together for the honour of God, and for our mutual edification and encouragement. We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. 3. They that rejoice in God, will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront that he was glad of it as a kindness, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord, with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us, and take us along with them.

(2.) The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph, *ver. 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* They that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their travel. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by, *Zech. iii. 7.* though it be the door-keeper's place, *Psalm lxxiv. 10.* We have now got a resting place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

2. The praises of Jerusalem, as *Psalm xlviii. 12.*

(1.) It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building; it is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the gospel church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

(2.) It is the holy city, *ver. 4.* it is the place where all Israel meet one another: Thither the tribes go up, from all parts of the country as one man, under the character of the tribes of the Lord, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together, 1. To receive instructions from God; they come to the testimony of Israel, to hear what God has to say to them, and to consult his oracle. 2. To ascribe the glory to God: to give thanks to the name of the Lord: which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, to give thanks.

(3.) It is the royal city, *ver. 5.* There are thrones of judgment: therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interests of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster-hall. Observe, what a goodly sight it was to see the testimony of Israel, and the thrones of judgment, such near neighbours; and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriended one another: Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek thy good.

Here, 1. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem, *ver. 6, 7.* Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, i. e. for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves, and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be enquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem, can pray for it, which is something more than shewing their goodwill, it is the appointed way of seeking in mercy. The peace and welfare of the Gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us.

Now, (1.) We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: They shall prosper that love thee. We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom or for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man, and man's worship of God: And in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own; for so well doth God love the gates of Zion, that he will love all those that do love them; and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

(2.) We are directed in our prayers for it, and words are put into our mouths, *ver. 7. Peace be within thy walls.* He teaches us to pray, 1. For all the inhabitants in general; all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications, i. e. let them never be attacked: or if they be let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. 2. For the princes and rulers especially; let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the helm, and have the conduct of public affairs; for if they prosper it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

2. He resolves that whatever others do, he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem; 1. In his prayers, *I will now say,* now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, *Peace be within thee.* He did not say, Let others pray for the public, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it, and rule for it: No; I will pray for it too. 2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers, *I will,* to the utmost of my power, seek thy good. Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good, we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it.

Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem, it was his own city, and the interest of his family were lodged in it. It is true; yet he professeth that was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem; but it proceeded from the dear love he had, 1. To the communion of saints: It is for my brethren and companions sakes, i. e. for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren, (so he calls them, *1 Chron. xxviii. 2.*) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which hath knit my heart to them. 2. To the ordinances of God: He had set his affection to the house of his God, *1 Chron. xxix. 3.* took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

P S A L M CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon; though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only, *ver. 1.* but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, 1. Their expectation from God, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. Their plea for mercy

with God, *ver. 3, 4.* In singing we must have our eyes up to God's favour with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach with a holy contempt.

A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. 3. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

We have here,

1. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, *ver. 1, 2.* Observe,

(1.) The title here given to God; O thou that dwellest in the heavens: Our Lord Jesus has taught us in prayer to have an eye to God, as our Father in heaven: not that he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the king in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect, and a place of power: he that dwells there, thence beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, Where is now your God? But then they can say with comfort, Our God is in the heavens, O thou that fittest in the heavens, so some: fittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and to that throne injured innocence may appeal.

(2.) The regard here had to God; the psalmist himself lifted up his eyes to him: The eyes of a good man are ever towards the Lord, *Psalm xlv. 15.* in prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul to God; especially in trouble, which was the case here. The eyes of the people waited on the Lord, *ver. 2.* We find mercy coming towards a people, when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are towards the Lord, *Zech. ix. 1.* The eyes of the body are heaven-ward, *Os homini sublime dedit,* to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. Our eyes wait on the Lord, i. e. the eye of desire and prayer; the begging eye, and the eye of dependence, hope and expectation; the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as the Lord, and our God, until that he have mercy upon us. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will shew us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it doth come.

This is illustrated, *ver. 2.* by a similitude: Our eyes are to God, as the eyes of a servant, or handmaid to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are, 1. To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and shew him how he must do it. Lord what wilt thou have me do? 2. To his supplying hand: servants look to their master or their mistress for their portion of meat in due season, *Prov. xxxi. 15.* And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. 3. To his assisting hand: If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? and in the strength of the Lord God, we must go forth and go on. 4. To his protecting hand: If the servant meet with opposition in his work; if he be questioned for what he doth; if he be wronged and injured; who should bear him out and right him, but his master that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted may appeal to their Master, We are thine, save us. 5. To his correcting hand. If the servant have provoked his master to beat him, he doth not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, It is enough, I will not contend for ever. The people of God were now under his rebukes, and whither should they turn but to him that smote them? *Isa. ix. 13.* to whom should they make supplication but to their Judge? They will not do as Hagar did, that outran her mistress when she put some hardship upon her, *Gen. xvi. 6.* but they submit themselves to and humble themselves under God's mighty hand. 6. To his rewarding hand; the servant expects his wages, his well-done from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence they have their reward, *Matt. vi. 2.* but true christians have their eye to God as their rewarder.

2. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition, *ver. 3, 4.* wherein,

1. They sue for mercy: not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, not pleading any merit of their own, why he should do for them, but, Have mercy upon us, O Lord have mercy upon us. We find little mercy with men, their tender mercies are cruel, there are cruel mockings, but this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy, and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, but the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

3. They set forth their grievances: We are exceedingly filled with contempt. Reproach is the wound, the burden they complain of. Observe, 1. Who were reproached; we, who have our eyes up to thee. Those that are owned of God are oftentimes despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, those that are at ease, and the proud, to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned. Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at ease, and the excellent ones are scorned and despised. The saints are a peaceable people, and yet are abused, *Psalm xxxv. 20.* the excellent ones of the earth, and yet undervalued, *Lam. iv. 1, 2.* 2. Who did reproach them; taking the words as we read them; they were the epicures that lived at ease, carnal, sensual people, *Job. xii. 5.* The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts, and serve their own bellies: and the proud, that set God himself at defiance and had a high opinion of themselves, they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them. 3. To what degree they were reproached. We are filled, we are surfeited with it; Our soul is exceedingly filled with it. The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say enough to make them despicable; and they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones, *Psalm xlii. 10.* Note, 1. Scorning and contempt has been, and is, and is likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called persecuting him; and so it is now, *Gal. iv. 29.* 2. In reference to the scorn and contempt of men, it is a matter of comfort that there is mercy with God; mercy to our good names, when they are barbarously used: Hear, O our God, for we are despised.

P S A L M CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people, from some very threatening

threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin; whether by foreign invasion or intestine insurrection, is not certain: whatever it was, he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others with the goodness of God, in making a way for them to escape: to him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself as conquerors used to do. 1. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, ver. 1-5. 2. He gives God the glory of their escape, ver. 6, 7 compared with ver. 1, 2. 3. He takes encouragement from thence to trust in God, ver. 8. In singing this psalm, besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people in our days, and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID.

1. IF it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say: 2. If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3. Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. 5. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

The people of God being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

1. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been, the more doth the skill of the physician appear in the cure.

Observe, (1.) Whence the threatening danger came: *Men rose up against us*: creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin: *Homo, homini lupus*. No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion should seek to swallow us up, but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father; that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose *tearer mercies are cruel*. But what was the matter with these men? Why their *wrath was kindled against us*, ver. 3. something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous*. Their wrath was kindled as fire ready to consume us: they were proud; and the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor. They were daring in their attempt, they *rose up against us*; rose in rebellion, with a resolution to *swallow us up alive*. (2.) How far it went, and how fatal it had been if it had gone a little further; we had been devoured, as a lamb by a lion; not only slain, but *swallowed up*, so that there should have been no relics of us remaining. *Swallowed up* with so much haste ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We had been deluged as the low grounds by a land flood, or the sands by a high spring tide. This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents, which speak this a song of degrees, or risings like the rest. *The waters had overwhelmed us*: what of us? Why, *the stream had gone over our souls*, our lives, our comforts; all that is dear to us. What waters? Why, the proud waters. God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

2. Of the goodness of God by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin: *The Lord was on our side*, and, if he had not been so, we had been undone. 1. God *was on our side*, he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us; he was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander in chief of our forces. 2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies: if it not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies had overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

6. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

1. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him, ver. 6. *Blessed be the Lord*. God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them: we rob him of his due, if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him, because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered, (1.) Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a prey; God *hath not given us a prey to their teeth*, intimating, that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth, unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. (2.) Like a bird, a little bird, the word signifies a sparrow, out of the snare of the fowler. The enemies are very subtil and spiteful, they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point, they are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak any silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail: then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness. *The snare is broken, and so we are delivered*. Isaac is saved, when he lay ready to be sacrificed. *Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*.

2. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be more encouraged to trust to God in the like dangers, ver. 8. *Our help is in the name of the Lord*. David had directed us, Psalm cxxi. 2. to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns: *My help is in the name of the Lord*; here as to the concerns of the public. *Our help is so*. It is comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have the church in the world; and can secure that church in the time of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

P S A L M CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet, Isa. iii. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous it shall be well with him. Woe to the wicked it shall be ill with him. *These are life and death, the blessing and the curse set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and the prophets*. 1. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, (1.) They have the promises of a good God, and they shall be fixed, ver. 1. and safe, ver. 2. and not always under hatches, ver. 3. (2.) They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, ver. 4. 2. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, ver. 5. Some of the Jewish rabbins are of opinion, that it has reference to the days of the Messiah; however, we that are members of the gospel-church, may certainly in singing this psalm, take the comfort of these promises, and the more if we stand in awe of the threatening.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. THEY that trust to the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. 2. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem for the LORD is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever. 3. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous: lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, yet may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may.

Here is, 1. The character of God's people to whom these promises be long. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter: But those shall have the benefit of them, and may take the comfort of them. (1.) Who are *righteous*, ver. 3. righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men; for his sake justified and sanctified. (2.) Who *trust in the Lord*, who depend upon his care, and devote themselves to his honour. All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it to appear they do so, by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

2. The promises themselves.

(1.) That their heart shall be established by faith: those minds shall be truly stayed, that are stayed on God: *They shall be as mount Zion*. The church in general is called *mount Zion*, Heb. xii. 18. and it shall in this respect be like *mount Zion*, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons that trust in God shall be established, Psalm cxii. 7. their faith shall be their fixation, Isa. vii. 9. *They shall be as mount Zion*, which is firm as it is a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. 1. *They cannot be removed by the prince of the power of the air*, nor by all his subtilty and strength. *They cannot be removed* from their integrity, nor from their confidence in God. 2. *They abide for ever* in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

(2.) That committing themselves to God, they shall be safe under his protection from all the insults of their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the mountains that were round about it, ver. 2. Those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also of very difficult access for an enemy. Such a defence is God's providence to his people! Observe, 1. The compass of it: *The Lord is round about his people* on every side; there is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy that goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, Job i. 10. 2. The continuance of it; *from henceforth, even for ever*. Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place, Job xiv. 18. but God's covenant with his people, cannot be broken, Isa. liv. 10. nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast for ever, ver. 1. and here to have God round about them for ever, intimates, that the promises of the stability and security of God's people, will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be as pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out, Rev. iii. 12. and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

3. That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, ver. 3. 1. It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of their power may oppress them, the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may light upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their name, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. 2. It is promised, that though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there, it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness; so short, that even with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape. 3. It is considered as a reason of this promise, that if the trouble should continue over long, the righteous themselves would be in temptation to put forth their hands to iniquity, i. e. to join with wicked people in their wicked practices; to say as they say, and to do as they do. There is danger, lest being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See Psalm lxxiii. 13, 14. Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the power of his grace. *Oppression makes a wise man mad*, especially if it continues long; therefore, for the elect's sake the days shall be shortened, that whatever goes with their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. 5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth from the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

Here

Here is, 1. The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant, *ver. 4. Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good.* This teaches us to pray for all good people, to make supplication for all saints; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. They that are as they should be shall be as they would be; provided they be upright in heart, that they be really as good as they seem to be; *with the upright, God will shew himself upright.* He doth not say, Do good, O Lord, to them that are perfect, that are blameless and spotless; but to them that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

2. The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters he doth not pray for, *I have not desired the woeful day, thou knowest,* but he predicts it. *As for such,* as having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the road of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways, use indirect ways to prevent trouble, or extricate themselves out of it: or those who instead of reforming grow worse and worse, and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, *God shall send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth with the workers of iniquity,* i.e. he shall appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, 1. Sinful ways are crooked ways; sin is the perverting of that which is right. 2. The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways, out of the right way, will be the same with theirs that have all along walked in them; nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than other, that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. *God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution, Go, ye cursed into everlasting fire; and these shall go away,* all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, *peace upon Israel,* may be taken as a prayer; God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reckoning with the evil doers. We read them as a promise, *Peace shall be upon Israel:* that is, (1.) When those that have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction, they that faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. (2.) The destruction of those that walk in crooked ways, will contribute to the peace and safety of the church; when Herod was cut off, *the word of God grew,* Acts xii. 23, 24. (3.) The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be their vexation, and will add much to the torment of those that perish in their wickedness, *Luke xiii. 28. I judge lxx. 13. My servants shall rejoice, but he shall be ashamed.*

P S A L M CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress, that this psalm was penned; most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Though Babylon be not mentioned here, as it is Psalm cxxxvii. yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably it was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist that returned then, Ezra ii. 41. It being a song of ascents, in which twice the same things are repeated with advancements, ver. 2, 3, and ver. 4, 5, it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. (1.) Those that were returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Those that were yet remaining in captivity are here prayed for, ver. 4, and encouraged, ver. 5, 6. It will be easy in singing this psalm to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church, or our own land, or in the great work of our salvation by Christ.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **W**HEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, their harps were hung up in the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them, and they lamented; but now their captivity is turned, they resume their harps; providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of providence, and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return.

Here is, 1. The deliverance God had wrought for them. He turned again the captivity of Zion. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity, for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was the Lord's doing, according to his word many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, The release of Israel is called the turning again of the captivity of Zion, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place was, for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, was the most valuable advantage of their return out of captivity.

2. The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly, that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to; we thought ourselves like men that dream, we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still, as sometimes it had been to the prophets, only a representation of it in vision; as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, Acts xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness before they are aware. *We were like them that are recovered to health,* so Dr. Hammond reads it: such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead, or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world. And the surprise of it put them into an extacy and transport of joy, that they could scarce contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expression of it, *Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. They that were laughed at, now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.

3. The notice which their neighbours took of it. *They said among the heathen, Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath done great things for that people,* such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity, and had triumphed in it, Jer. xlii. 8, 9. Psalm cxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable: besides that, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him, an acknowledgement of his wisdom, power and providence.

4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, *ver. 3.* The heathen were but spectators, and spoke of it only as matter of news; they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spoke of it as sharers in it. 1. With application: he hath done great things for us, things that we are interested in, and have advantage by. Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ hath wrought out, as wrought out for us, *who loved me, and gave himself for me.* 2. With affection, whereof we are glad. The heathen were amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad. While Israel went a whoring from their God, joy was forbidden them, Hos. ix. 1. but now the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reforming people that are and shall be the rejoicing people. Observe here, (1.) God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. (2.) God is to be eyed as the author of all the great things done for the church. (3.) It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the fourth. 5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing; bringing his sheaves with him.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted; they that were come out of captivity, were still in distress, even in their own land, Neh. i. 3. and many yet remained in Babylon. And therefore they rejoiced with trembling, and bare upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here,

1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance, *ver. 4. Turn again our captivity.* Let those that are returned to their own land, be eased of the burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity to join with their brethren that were returned, would be as welcome to both sides, as streams of water in those countries, that lying far south were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, Prov. xxv. 2—5.

2. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that the seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, *ver. 5, 6.*

1. Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often, they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they sow in tears, i.e. they do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing, when we suffer ill we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooseth to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others: tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandmen sows when corn is dear, and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus doth a good man sow in tears.

2. They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow, shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that sow to the spirit in this vale of tears, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted.*

P S A L M CXXVII.

This is a family psalm, as divers. before were state-poems, and church-poems. It is entitled (as we read it) for Solomon, dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care and industry would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read a Song of Solomon, and he wrote a great many; and they compare it with his Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to shew the vanity of worldly care, and how necessary it is that we keep in with God. On him we must depend, (1.) For wealth, ver. 1, 2. (2.) For heirs to leave it to, ver. 3, 4, 5. In singing this psalm we must have our eye up unto God for success in all our undertakings, and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us and no more than he makes it to be.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES FOR SOLOMON.

1. **E**XCEPT the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. 2. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. 3. Lo

3. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man : so are children of the youth. 5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the divine providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teacheth him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion ; parents in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions.

We must have an eye to God,

1. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for king's houses are no longer safe than God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing and not our own contrivance.

(1.) For the raising of a family. *Except the Lord build the house by his providence and blessing, they labour in vain*, though never so ingenious, that build it. We may understand it of the material house, except the Lord bless the building, it is to no purpose for men to build, no more than for the builders of Babel that attempted it in defiance of heaven, or Hiel that built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice. *Hab. ii. 11, 12.* to be sure God doth not build there ; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean ; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases ; but all in vain, unless God builds up the family, and raise the poor out of the dust. The best-laid project fails unless God crowns it with success. See *Mal. i. 4.*

(2.) For the securing of a family or a city, for that is it that is instanced in ; if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. *Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen that go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, which the time-liest discoveries may not be able to prevent the mischief of.* The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.

(3.) For the enriching of a family ; that is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of providence, no more than that which is the product of one happy turn. *It is vain for you to rise up early, and set up late, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world ; usually those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early ; but there are some so hot upon the world, that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares ; and they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest, they eat the bread of sorrows.* It is part of our sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face, but those go farther, all their days they eat in darkness, *Ecl. v. 17.* They are continually full of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burden to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them ; for riches are not always to men of understanding, *Ecl. ix. 11.* And they that loved God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called *Jedidiah, Beloved of the Lord, 2 Sam. xii. 25.* to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a bustle, and to say, *I will be king ;* Solomon sits still, and being beloved of the Lord, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, 1. Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world, is a vain and fruitless thing ; we weary ourselves for vanity if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, *Hag. i. 6, 9.* 2. Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe, *Pfalm iv. 8.* that it is sweet, *Jer. xxxi. 25, 26.* Then God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, our souls returning to him and reposing in him as our rest, and when we awake to be still with him : and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He giveth his beloved sleep, *i. e.* quietness and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to keep ourselves in the love of God, and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

2. In the increase of the family : he shews,

(1.) That children are God's gift, ver. 3. The key of the womb is in his hand, if children are withheld, it is God that withholds them, *Gen. xxx. 2.* If they are given, it is God that gives them, *Gen. xxxiii. 5.* and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had ; for those that desire children as an heritage from the Lord, must receive them in the way he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife, *Mal. ii. 15.* Therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom and shall not increase. Children are a heritage and a reward : and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burdens ; for he that sends months, will send meat, if we trust in him. Obed-edom had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, *1 Chron. xxvi. 5.* Children are an heritage for the Lord, as well as from him ; they are my children (saith God) which thou hast borne unto me, *Ezek. xvi. 20.* and then they are most our honour and comfort, when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family. As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, that knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, *i. e.* children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by that time they need their service. Or rather, children that are themselves young : they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies : The family that has a large flock of children is like a quiver full of arrows of different sizes, we may suppose, but all of use one time or other ; children of different capacities and inclinations, may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment, in battle he need not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, as his own children, *1 Sam. ii. 4, 5.* Observe here, That children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation : but afterwards, when they are gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand, it is too late to bend them then.

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But these arrows in the hand, too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

P S A L M CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God ; in this we are taught, that the only way to obtain that blessing which will make our families comfortable, is to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. They that do so in general they shall be blessed, ver. 1, 2—4. In particular, (1.) They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments, ver. 2. (2.) Their relations shall be agreeable, ver. 3. (3.) They shall live to see their families brought up, ver. 6. (4.) They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition, ver. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth that religion and piety is the best friend to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so, and that we have found it so : and encourage ourselves and others with it.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. BLESSED is every one that feareth the LORD, that walketh in his ways. 2. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands : happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house : thy children like olive-plants round about thy table. 4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed, that feareth the LORD. 5. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion : and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. 6. Yea, thou shalt see thy childrens children, and peace upon Israel.

It is here shewed that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

1. It is here again and again laid down, as an undoubted truth that they that are truly holy, are truly happy. They whose blessed state we are here assured of are such as fear the Lord, and walk in his ways : That have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart, the tenor of the conversation will be accordingly : and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways and not trampling in them or drawing back. Such are blessed, ver. 1. and shall be blessed, ver. 4. God blessed them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness arising from this blessing, is here secured, (1.) To all the saints universally ; *Blessed is every one that fears the Lord*, whoever he be in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor in the world, if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him. (2.) To such a saint in particular ; thus shall the man be blessed : Not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests. (3.) We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves, ver. 2. *Happy shalt thou be ;* thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God and walk in his ways. Happy shalt thou be, that is, it shall be well with thee. Whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it ; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity. It is asserted, ver. 4. with a note commanding attention, *Behold thus shall the man be blessed ;* behold it by faith in the promise : behold it by observation in the performance of the promise ; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful ; and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.

2. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good : and that is enough.

1. That by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood, and live comfortable upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease without care or pains, but thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands. Here is a double promise, (1.) That they shall have something to do, (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life) and shall have health and strength and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live as the disabled poor do upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty, *with quietness to work and eat our own bread, 2 Thess. iii. 12.* (2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get, others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies : God will not blast it and blow upon it, as he did, *Hag. i. 8.* and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry, as the sleep, so the food of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort. (1.) The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house, not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and, with the fruit whereof both God and men are honoured, *Judg. ix. 13.* The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think, because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites, it was the tree of knowledge itself. The wife's place is the husband's house, there her business lies, and that is her castle ; *Where is Sarah thy wife ? Behold in the tent*, where should the wife be else ? Her place is by the sides of the house, not underfoot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer ; if she be so, she is but as the grass upon the house-top, in the next psalm ; but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man, she shall be a loving wife, as the vine that cleaveth to the house-side, an obedient wife, as the vine that is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom and righteousness and good management, the branches of which run over the wall, *Gen. xlix. 22.* *Pfalm lxxx. 11.* Like a fruitful vine, not cumbering the ground, or bringing forth four grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. (2.) The children shall be as olive plants, likely in time to be olive trees, and though wild by nature, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its root and fatness, *Rom. xi. 17.* It is pleasant to parents that have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it, to have many children, enough to surround

it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them; Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity, that his children were about him, Job xxi. 5. To have them at table to keep up the pleasantness of the table talk: To have them in health, craving food and not physic: To have them like olive plants, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God had promised, and which they pray for. *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. *Blessings out of Zion* are the best blessings, which flow not from common providence, but from special grace, Psalm xx. 2.

4. That they shall live long to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations, thou shalt see thy children's children, as Joseph, Gen. l. 23. Thy family shall be built up and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it. *Children's children*, if they be good children, are the crown of old men, Prov. xvii. 6. who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which every man that fears God is no less concerned for, than for the prosperity of his own family. Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. *Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem* as long as thou livest, though thou livest long: and shall not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles. A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion, pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

P S A L M CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel; It is not certain when it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. (1.) They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers, out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, ver. 1-4. (2.) They look forward with a believing prayer for, and prospect of the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, ver. 5, 8. In singing this psalm, we may apply it both ways to the gospel Israel, which like the Old Testament Israel has weathered many a storm, and is still threatened by many enemies.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **M**ANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. 3. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. 4. The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God in its several ages is here spoken of, or rather here speaks as one single person, now old and gray headed, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And upon the review it is found,

1. That the church has often been greatly distressed by its enemies on earth. *Israel may now say* I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a speckled bird, pecked at by all the birds round about, Jer. xii. 9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins, it was for them that God punished them: but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. For these many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Note, God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church from its infancy has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges, then they were afflicted, and from thence-forward more or less. The gospel church ever since it had being, has been by times afflicted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under, ver. 3. *The plowers plowed upon my back.* We read Psalm cxxxv. 3, of the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous, where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the plough of the wicked upon the back of the righteous, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in both places are jumbled, the sense however of both is the same, and is too plain that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously. They tear them as the husbandman tears the ground with his plough-share, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to wear out the saints of the most High, as the ground is worn out that has been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so, Isa. x. 7. *They made long their furrows*, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people, understand the stripes they gave them. *The cutters cut upon my back*, so they read it: The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings (probably the captives had) and cruel mockings (for we read of the scourge, or lash of the tongue) Heb. xi. 36. and so it was fulfilled in Christ, who gave his back to the smiters, Isa. l. 6. Or, if many refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel: *Zion shall for your sake be ploughed as a field*, Micah iii. 12.

2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

(1.) The enemies projects have been defeated; they have afflicted the church in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point; many a storm it has weathered, many a shock, and many a brunt it has borne, and yet it is in being: *They have not prevailed against me.* One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

(2.) The enemies power has been broken; *God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked*; has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughings; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing, has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men, to do the mischief they design against his church and flaming their counsels.

These words, *The Lord is righteous*, may refer either to the distresses, or

to the deliverances of the church. 1. *The Lord is righteous*, in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, Nah. ix. 33. 2. *The Lord is righteous* in not suffering Israel to be ruined: for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompence, 1 Thess. i. 6.

5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. 6. Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up: 7. Where with the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. 8. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

The psalmist having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that has been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm as Deborah did her song. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, Judg. v. 31.

1. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers, that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world.

2. We ought to pray that all the attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be confounded and turned back with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprize and expectation. *Let them all be confounded*, is as much as they shall be all confounded. The confusion imprecated and predicted is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-tops. As men they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, Isa. li. 12. But as they are enemies to Zion, they are so certainly marked for ruin, that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as the grass on the house-tops, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

(1.) It perisheth presently, it withers before it groweth up to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner it doth wither. *It withers before it is plucked up*, so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God.

(2.) It is of no use to any body, nor are they but the unprofitable burdens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them, than the husbandman doth by the grass on his house top. *Their harvest will be a heap in the day of grief*, Isa. xvii. 11.

3. No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, ver. 8. Observe. 1. It has been an ancient and laudable custom not only to salute and wish a good day to strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers, Ruth, ii. 4. *The Lord be with you.* We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculation, if it comes from a devout and upright heart. 2. Religious expressions being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God, will not prostrate to it the usual forms of salutation, which favoured of devotion, for holy things must not be jested with. 3. It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, 2 John 11. When it is said none will bless them and shew them respect, more is implied, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and wo to those that have the prayers of the saints against them, *cursed his habitation*, Job v. 3.

P S A L M CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have sometimes been made use of by penitents upon their admission into the church; and in singing it we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresseth, (1.) His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His repentance before God, ver. 3, 4. (3.) His attendance upon God; ver. 5, 6. (4.) His expectations from God, ver. 7, 8. And as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of one humble penitent to another.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **O**UT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2. Lord hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3. If, thou, LORD, should mark iniquities: O LORD who shall stand? 4. But there is forgiveness with thee: that thou mayest be feared.

In these verses we are taught,

1. Whatever condition we are in, though never so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, ver. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do; in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted: but in the greatest depths it is our privilege that we may cry unto God, and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in this world; Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower, and to recover us out of the horrible pit, and miry clay. Psalm xl. 1, 2.

2. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for, ver. 2. *Lord, hear my voice*, my complaint and prayer, and let thine ears be attentive to the voice, both of my afflictions and of my supplications.

3. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences, ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* He calling God Lord twice in so few words, Jah and Adonai, is very emphatical,

tical, and speaks a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty, and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, (1.) To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities, and is liable to be animadverted upon. (2.) To own the power and justice of God, which is such, that if he should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, there were no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best manner to ground a condemnation upon; and if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he makes remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great; greatly aggravated and very provoking: And then if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour, and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? we could not make our escape, nor resist or bear up under his avenging hand. (3.) Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us: It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

4. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, *ver. 4.* Here is, (1.) God's grace discovered and pleaded with him by a penitent sinner: *But there is forgiveness with thee.* It is our unspeakable comfort in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is it we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin, he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* He has promised to forgive the sins of those who do repent. Never any that dwell with him found him implacable, but easy to be intreated; and swift to shew mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. *There is a propitiation with thee,* so some read it: Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; for he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. 2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it. *There is forgiveness with thee,* not that thou mayest be made bold with, and presumed upon, but that thou mayest be feared: In general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men, who being sinners could have no dealings with God if he were not a merciful that could pass by a great many faults: But this encourages us to come into his service, that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanor; no, nor for any if we truly repent. This doth in a special manner invite those that have sinned to repent and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful and will receive them upon their repentance, *Joel ii. 13. Matt. iii. 2.* and particularly we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy, *Hos. xii. 5. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness;* and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God, when we make it the object of our holy fear.

5. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6. My soul waiteth for the LORD, more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning. 7. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Here 1. The psalmist engageth himself to trust in God, and to wait for him, *ver. 5, 6.* Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents, *I wait for the Lord;* from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it doth come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. *My soul doth wait,* i. e. I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is for the Lord that my soul waiteth, for the gifts of his grace, and the operations of his power. (2.) The ground of that dependence; *In his word do I hope.* We must hope for that only which he hath promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, and we must hope for it because he hath promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. (2.) The degree of that dependence; *More than they that watch for the morning:* who are, 1. Well assured that the morning will come, and so am I, that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. 2. Very desirous that it would come. Centinels that keep guard upon the walls, they that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day with to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly doth this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and the visits of his grace; and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances, than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus; *My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning* and gives this sense of it, To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice.

2. He encourageth all the people of God in like manner, to depend upon him, and trust in him: *Let Israel hope in the Lord, and wait for him;* not only the body of the people, but every good man, who firmeth himself by the name of Israel, *Isa. xlv. 5.* Let all that devote themselves to God, cheerfully stay themselves upon him, *ver. 7, 8.* for two reasons: 1. Because the light of nature discovers to us, that there is mercy with him, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, and the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. 2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us, that there is redemption with him, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fullness of time; it was in the beginning hid in God. See here, (1.) The nature of this redemption, it is redemption from sin, from all sin: and therefore can be no other but that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is he that saves his people from their sins; *Matt. i. 21. that redeems them from all iniquity,* Tit. ii. 14. and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, *Rom. xi. 26.* It is he that redeems us both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin. (2.) The riches of this redemption; it is plenteous redemption; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me faith the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plenteous redemption. (3.) The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: *He shall redeem Israel; Israel according to the spirit;* all those that are in covenant with God as Israel was, and that are Israelites indeed in whom is no guile.

This psalm is David's profession of humility; but humbly, made with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain glory. It is probable enough, that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the calumnies of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious, aspiring man, who under pretence of a divine appointment, sought the kingdom in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God that on the contrary, 1. He aimed at nothing high and great, *ver. 1.* 2. He was very easy in every condition to which God allotted him, *ver. 2.* and therefore, 3. He encourageth all good people to trust in God as he did, *ver. 3.* Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms, that there are many who cannot say, Their heart is not haughty, &c. It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we ought to be; with repentance that we have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID.

1. LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. 2. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. 3. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth, and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:

1. Confidence of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under, and the temptations he was in.

(1.) He aimed not at a high condition, nor was he fond of making a figure in the world, but if God had so ordered could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother in a passion charged him with pride, *1 Sam. xvii. 28.* but the charge was groundless and unjust; God that searcheth the heart knew.

1. That he had no conceited opinion of himself, or his own merits: *Lord, my heart is not haughty.* Humble souls cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God reigning in the heart will subdue all inordinate self-love.

2. That he had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look: *My eyes are not lofty:* either to look with an envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look, *Prov. vi. 15.* but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.

3. That he did not employ himself in things above his station; *in things too great or too high for him;* not in studies too high: he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation; or covet to be wise above what is written: It is learning high enough to know God and our duty. Not in affairs too great: he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no nor for a soldier; for when his brethren went to the wars, he staid at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which doth not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high for men: and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame that affect undue honours.

(2.) He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in, *ver. 2. I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother.* As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so since God had appointed him to it, he had not carried it insolent towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but, 1. He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weaning, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as intirely at God's dispose, as the child at the dispose of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour hath taught us humility, by this comparison, *Matt. xviii. 3.* we must become as little children. 2. He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world, as a child is to the breast when it is thoroughly weaned from it. *I have levelled and quieted myself* (so Dr. Hammond reads it) *as a child that is weaned.* This intimates that our hearts are naturally as desirous of worldly things, as the babe is of the breast, and relish them; cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But by the grace of God a soul that is sanctified is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us. The child is perhaps cross and fretful while it is in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two it is forgotten, the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus doth a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens; lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves, and all about us, then our souls are as a weaned child.

2. Confidence in God; and this David recommends to all the Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of it, *ver. 3. Let Israel hope in the Lord,* and let them continue to do so, from henceforth and for ever. Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them hope in the Lord, that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. Thus it is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

It is probable, this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge his father gave him, *1 Chron. xxviii. 2, &c.* Having fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done. 1. He had built this house for the honour

honour and service of God; and when he brings the ark into it, the token of God's presence, he desires God himself would come and take possession of it, ver. 8, 9, 10. *With these words Solomon concluded his prayer,* 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. 1. He had built it in pursuance of the orders he had received from his father, and therefore his pleas to enforce these petitions refer to David. (1.) He pleads David's piety towards God, ver. 1-7. (2.) He pleads God's promise to David, ver. 11-18. The former introduceth his petition, the latter follows it as an answer to it. In singing this psalm, we must have a concern for the Gospel church, as the temple of God, and a dependance upon Christ, as David our king, in whom the mercies of God are sure mercies.

¶ A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **L**ORD, remember David, and all his afflictions. 2. How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. 8. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; 4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids. 5. Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. 6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. 7. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. 8. Arise O LORD, into thy rest: thou, and the ark of thy rest strength. 9. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. 10. For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name.

Observe, 1. What he pleads: two things,

(1.) That what he had done was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own; I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldest do this; but, *Lord, remember David*, with whom thou makest the covenant; as Moses prayed, *Exod. xxxii. 13. Remember Abraham*, the first trustee of the covenant; remember *all his afflictions*, all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of; or his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains, 2 Sam. vii. 2. Remember *all his humility and meekness*, so some read it; all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession and their afflictions, their services and sufferings; God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness; the care they took of and the many prayers they put up for those that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ, the Son of David, and to all his afflictions; Lord, remember the covenant made with him and the satisfaction made by him; *Remember all his offerings*, Psalm xx. 3. i. e. all his sufferings.

He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe,

1. Who he bound himself to; *To the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob*. Vows are to be made to God, who is a party as well as a witness. The Lord is the mighty One of Jacob! Jacob's God, and a mighty One, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance, Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty One.

2. What he bound himself to do; *to find out a place for the Lord*, i. e. for the ark, the tokens of his presence. He had read in the law frequent mention of the place that God would chuse to put his name there, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown there was no such place, Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the seals of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity: Well, saith David, I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of the tribes, a place of habitation for the mighty One of Jacob: a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it.

3. How intent he was upon it; he would not settle in his house: nay, he would not sleep in his bed till he had brought this matter to some head, ver. 3, 4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow, that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather, where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence, with which he was punished for numbering the people, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Then said David, *This is the house of the Lord*. And perhaps it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him, was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day-binding, ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to providence; *for we know not what a day may bring forth*: Especially in the great work of conversion to God, we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life, till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

(2.) That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, ver. 6, 7. 1. They were inquisitive after the ark, for they lamented its obscurity, 1 Sam. vii. 2. They heard of it at Ephratah, i. e. in Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, there they were told it had been, but it was gone; they found it at last in the fields of the wood, i. e. in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. Thence all Israel fetched it with great solemnity in the beginning of David's reign, 1 Chron. xiii. 6. so that in building this house for the ark, Solomon had gratified all Israel; they need not go about to seek the ark any more, they now knew where to find it. 2. They were resolved to attend it. Let us but have a convenient place, and we will go into his tabernacle, to pay our homage there; *we will worship at his footstool*, as subjects and supplicants; which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, in the days of Saul, 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

2. What he prays for, ver. 8, 9, 10.

(1.) That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to

take up his residence in his temple which he had built. *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest*, and let this be it, thou, even the ark of thy strength, the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

(2.) That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty: *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness*: let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note. Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute. They are thy priests, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee, if they be not clothed with righteousness.

(3.) That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them: *Let thy saints shout for joy*: they did so when the ark was brought into the city of David, 2 Sam. vii. 15. they will do so when the priests are clothed with righteousness. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are helpers of our joy, 2 Cor. i. 24.

(4.) That Solomon's own prayer upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple might be accepted of God: *Turn not away the face of thine anointed*, i. e. deny me not the things I have asked of thee; send me not away ashamed. He pleads, 1. That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great Anointed, who in his intercession urges his designation to his office. He is God's Anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. 2. That he was the Son of David; for his sake do not deny me; and this is the Christian's plea; for the sake of Christ, our David, in whom thou art well pleased, accept me. He is David whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the beloved. He is God's servant whom he upholds, Isa. xlii. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may with great boldness for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood; let both ministers and people do their duty.

11. The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. 12. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony, that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. 13. For the LORD hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. 14. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. 15. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

These are precious promises, confirmed by an oath, that the heirs of them might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged in the prayer, or as answers returned to the prayer: believers know how to make use of the promises both ways; with them to speak to God, and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion: And the promises concerning Zion here are as applicable to the gospel church, as these concerning David's seed are to Christ; and therefore both pleadable by us, and very comfortable to us.

Here is, 1. The choice God made of David's house, and Zion hill. Both were of divine appointment.

(1.) God chose David's family for the royal family, and confirmed his choice by an oath, ver. 11, 12. David being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent*, will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord, that he would find him a house? ver. 2. The Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David refers, 1. To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins: *Of the fruit of thy body, will I set upon thy throne*, which was fulfilled in Solomon; David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 Kings i. 48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever: *If thy children, in following ages, will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them*; (God himself engageth to teach them, and he did his part) they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects is that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs *quamdiu se bene gesserint*. The issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. 2. To an everlasting successor, a king that should descend from his loins, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us, that David himself so understood it, Acts ii. 30. *He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*; and in the fulness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. He did fulfil the condition of the promise, he kept God's covenant and his testimony; did his father's will, and in all things pleased him, and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good, he and the children God has given him: all believers shall sit upon the throne for evermore, Rom. iii. 21.

(2.) God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, ver. 13, 14. He chose the mount Zion which he loved, Psalm lxxviii. 68. he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, *This is my rest for ever*, and not my residence for a time as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David, he chose it for the royal city because God chose it for the holy city: God said, *Here will I dwell*, and therefore David said, *Here will I dwell*, for he stuck to his principle: *It is good for me to be near to God*. Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel-church, which is called mount Zion, Heb. xii. 18. and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field, but the church of Christ is the house of the living God, 1 Tim. iii. 15. and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church is the comfort and joy of all its members.

2. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house, and Zion hill: Whom God chooseth he will bless.

(2.) God

(1.) God having chosen Zion hill, he promiseth to bless that, 1. With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness hath the promise of them, ver. 15. The earth shall yield her increase; there where religion is set up, there shall be provision, and in blessing God will bless it, Psalm lxxvii. 6. he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes farther; *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised, that God will take care even of them. (1.) By his providence they shall be kept from wanting, they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it; so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's power shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor according to their ability, and the church must take care that they be not neglected, Acts vi. 1. (2.) By his grace, they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have of all others reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

2. With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness, ver. 16. which is an answer to the prayer, ver. 9. (1.) It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; it is here promised, that God will clothe them with salvation; not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people: they shall both save themselves and those that hear them, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. (2.) It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

(2.) God having chosen David's family, he here promiseth to bless that also with suitable blessings.

1. Growing power: *There in Zion will I make the horn of David to bud.* ver. 17. The royal dignity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the throne of it. Christ is the horn of salvation, noting a plentiful and powerful salvation, which God hath raised up and made to bud in the house of his servant David. David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous, Psalm xx. 10. and in recompence for it, God here promises to make his horn to bud, for to them that have power and use it well, more shall be given.

2. Lasting honour; *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* Thou wilt light my candle, Psalm xviii. 29. that lamp is likely to burn bright, which God ordains. A lamp is a successor: for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it; It is a succession; for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

3. Complete victory. *His enemies, that have formed designs against him, will I clothe with shame,* when they shall see their designs baffled. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. Universal prosperity. *Upon himself shall his crown flourish,* i. e. his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Christ Jesus, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes endure not to all generations; Prov. xxvii. 24. but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as *fade not away.*

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium on unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we would think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well enough if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace. The conjecture some make is well enough of the kind, that David penned it upon occasion of the union between the tribes, when they all met unanimously to make him king. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, lesser and larger, civil and sacred. Here is, 1. The doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, ver. 1. 2. The illustration of that doctrine in two similitudes, ver. 2, 3. 3. The proof of it in a good reason given for it, ver. 3. and then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do in singing of it, provoking ourselves and one another to holy love. The contents of this psalm in our bibles are short, but very proper; it is the benefit of the communion of saints.

A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID.

1. **BEHOLD** how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. 2. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. 3. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Here see, 1. What it is that is commanded: *Brethren dwelling together in unity*; not only not quarrelling and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each other's welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder and at a distance from each other; that indeed may prevent enmity and strife, Gen. xiii. 9. but the goodness and pleasantness for brethren to dwell together, and so to dwell in unity; To dwell even as one, so some read it; as having one heart, one soul, one interest. David had many sons, by many wives; probably, David penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love one another; which, if they had done, much of the mischief that arose in his family had been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests during the government of the Judges, and it was often of ill consequence; but now they were united under one common head, he would

have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantage; especially, since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for public worship, and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

2. How commendable it is. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is!* It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort; it is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. *Behold how good!* we cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. *Behold* it is a rare thing, and therefore admirable: Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! *Behold* it is an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts: *Behold* it is an exemplary thing, which where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

3. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated. (1.) It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours to the great delight of all the by-standers, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high priest, so plentifully that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment, ver. 2. 1. This was holy ointment, so must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love them that are begotten, for his sake that begot, 1 John v. 1. 2. This ointment was a composition made up by a divine dispensatory, God appointed the ingredients and the quantities. Thus believers are taught of God to love one another; it is a grace of his work in us. 3. It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is in the sight of God of great price; and that is precious indeed which is so in God's sight. 4. It was grateful both to Aaron himself and to all about him; so is holy love; it is like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows. 5. Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not, we are nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

(2.) It is satisfying; it is profitable as well as pleasing. It is as the dew: it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions as the evening dews cool the air and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good, it moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, malice and bitterness disfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. ii. 1. It is as the dew of Hermon, a common hill; for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies; and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies: Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. It is said of the dew that it tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Micah v. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, that is publican's love; but should prevent it, that is divine love.

4. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love: Loving people are blessed people. For,

(1.) They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. *There, where brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands the blessing,* a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise are commanded blessings, for he hath commanded his covenant for ever: Blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for he speaks and it is done.

(2.) They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands of them that dwell in love, is *life for evermore*; that is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, the God of love and peace shall be with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

PSALM CXXXIV.

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and if they were at any time sung all together in the temple service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. 1. In the two first verses the priests or Levites that sat up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord, are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. 2. In the last verse they that were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest, or the captain of the guard. Or thus; they who did that service did mutually exhort one another, and pray for one another. In singing this psalm we must stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

A SONG OF DEGREES.

1. **BEHOLD**, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary: and bless the LORD. 3. The LORD, that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a twofold blessing:

1. Our blessing God: that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, ver. 1, 2.

(1.) It is a call to the Levites to do it; they were the servants of the Lord by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord. Numb. iii. 6, &c. Some of them did by night stand in the house of the Lord, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains, there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar, nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that departed not from the temple night or day, Luke ii. 37. Now these are here called upon to bless the Lord. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must redeem time for holy exercises; and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of good husbandry, to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations;

tion; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable demand to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. They that stood in the house of the Lord, must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house: Let them therefore *blefs the Lord*; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them *lift up their hands*, in the doing of it, in token of their lifting up of their hearts. *Let them lift up their hands in holiness*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; or in sanctification; as it is fit when they lift them up in the sanctuary; and let them remember, that when they were appointed to walk before they went in to minister, they were thereby taught to *lift up holy hands* in prayer and praise.

(2.) It is a call to us to do it, who, as christians, are made priests to our God and Levites, *Isa. lvi. 21.* we are the *servants of the Lord*, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him, even by night we are under his eye and have access to him: Let us therefore *blefs the Lord*, and again *blefs him*; think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us *lift up our hands* in prayer, in praise, in vows: let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is uttered in with *Behold!* a note commanding attention: Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and carry yourselves accordingly.

2. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, *ver. 3.* Whether it is the watchman's blessing their captain, or the Levites blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief, as many take it, because it is in the singular number. *The Lord blefs thee*; or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many, *The Lord blefs thee*, i. e. each of you in particular, thee and thee; you that are blessing God, the Lord blefs you; is not material: We may learn, 1. That we need desire no more to make us happy, then to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blefseth they are blessed indeed. 2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, that blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. 3. It is a great encouragement to us when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he that made heaven and earth, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his dispose, of the upper and nether springs. 4. We ought to beg these blessings not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only the Lord blefs me, but the Lord blefs thee, thus testifying our belief with the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. Those that exhort us, we must pray for them. Though the *less is blessed of the greater*, *Heb. vii. 7.* yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

P S A L M CXXXV.

This is one of the Hallelujah psalms; that is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its alpha and its omega. (1.) It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the servants of the Lord to praise him, as in the foregoing psalm, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) It goes on to furnish us with matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, *ver. 4.* 2. As the God of gods, *ver. 5.* 3. As the God of the whole world, *ver. 6, 7.* 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, *ver. 8-11.* 5. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them, and what he would do, *ver. 12-14.* 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, *ver. 15-18.* (3.) It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concerned to praise God, *ver. 12-21.* In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled, as our mouths, with the high praises of God.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD, praise ye the name of the LORD, praise him, O ye servants of the LORD. 2. Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. 3. Praise ye the LORD, for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. 4. For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Here is, 1. The duty we are called to; to praise the Lord, to praise his name; praise him, and again praise him. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself, and has done for others: Take all occasions to speak well of God, and to give his truths and ways a good word.

2. The persons that are called upon to do this: the servants of the Lord, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, *ver. 2.* They have most reason to praise God that are admitted to the privileges of his house; and they see most reason that there behold his beauty and taste his bounty: from them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places: Who should praise him if they do not?

3. The reason why we should praise God.

(1.) Because he whom we are to praise is good; and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that; his goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory.

(2.) Because the work is its own wages. Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant: It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste to the pleasures of sin.

(3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people, *ver. 4.* The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him for a name and a praise, *Jer. xiii. 11.* and therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people, *Exod. xix. 5.* they are his *Segullah*, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, precious in his sight and honourable. For this distinguishing, surprising favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy, ungrateful people under the sun.

5. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods. 6. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, he maketh lightnings for the rain: he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. 8. Who smote the first-born out of

Egypt, both of man and beast. 9. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10. Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings: 11. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12. And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. 13. Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever, and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. 14. For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God, as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most large, because this we are less forward to consider.

1. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness, *ver. 5.* The Lord is great, great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place! He asserts it with assurance. I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it, i. e. I am sure of it, I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul. He asserts it with an holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him; he is not only above any god, but above all gods, infinitely above them, betwixt him and them there is no comparison.

2. He proves him to be a great God, by the greatness of his power, *ver. 6.* (1.) He hath an absolute power, and may do what he will: Whatsoever the Lord pleased; that did he, and none could controul him, or say unto him, what dost thou? He doth what he pleaseth because he pleaseth, and giveth not an account of any of his matters. (2.) He hath an almighty power, and can do what he will: if he will work, none shall hinder. (3.) This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he doth what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do nothing; but our God can do any thing, and doth every thing.

3. He gives instances of his great power.

(1.) In the kingdom of nature, *ver. 7.* All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him. 1. It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe: The heat of the sun raiseth them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God, that nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, *Psal. xix. 6.* He causeth the vapours to ascend, not only unhelped, but unseen by us, from the earth, from the ends of the earth, i. e. from the seas, by which the earth is surrounded. 2. It is he, that out of those vapours so raised forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage in fruitful showers. Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he makes lightnings for the rain; by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds that they may water the earth. Here is fire and water thoroughly reconciled by divine omnipotence; They come together, and yet the water doth not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, *1 Kings xviii. 38.* 4. The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them, that we cannot tell whence they come or whither they go, but God brings them out of his treasures, with as much exactness and design, as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

(2.) In the kingdoms of men; and here he instanceth in the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion, and irresistible power. 1. In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called tokens and wonders, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them; They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants, i. e. his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his sons, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born both of men and cattle, was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. 2. In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, *ver. 10.* They that were in possession of the land designed for Israel, had all possible advantages for keeping possession; the people were numerous and warlike, and confederate against Israel; they were great nations; Yet if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed: but these great nations had mighty kings, and yet they were all smitten and slain: Sihon and Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, *ver. 10, 11.* No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God, when the time, the set time for it is come. 3. In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleaseth, gave Canaan to be an heritage to Israel his people: It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession; and it descended as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

4. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace, (1.) Of his glory, *ver. 13.* Thy name, O God, endures for ever. God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequence; What God doth, it shall be for ever, *Ecc. iii. 14.* His name endureth for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to *Exod. iii. 15.* where, when God had called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds, *This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* God is, and will be always the same to his church, a gracious, a faithful, wonder-working God, and his church is, and will be the same to him, a thankful, praising people; and thus his name endures for ever. (2.) Of his grace; he will be kind to his people. 1. He will plead their cause against others that contend with them; he will judge his people, i. e. he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. 2. He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them; he will be intreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them, i. e. he will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 36.*

15. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 16. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. 17. They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. 18. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them. 19. Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron. 20. Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21. Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

The design of these verses is,

1. To arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worship, by shewing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, *Psal. cxv. 4, &c.* (1.) They were gods of their own making, being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them; and then what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the work of men's hands, and the deities that were supposed to inform them were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination. (2.) They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, not of the animal life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, not so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes and ears, and mouths and nostrils, was such a jest, as that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to expect any good from such mock deities. (3.) Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were; both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, *ver. 18.* The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping of a God that is a Spirit, make us spiritual and wise.

2. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, *ver. 19, 20, 21.* The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations is that worship idols, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better things. Therefore, 1. Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them; *Bless the Lord, and again and again bless the Lord.* In the parallel place, *Psalms cxv. 9, 10, 11.* by way of inference, from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us, is, to trust in the Lord, here to bless him; by putting our trust in God we give glory to him, and they that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him. The house of Israel, the nation in general; the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that feared the Lord, though they were not of the house of Israel. 2. Let God have the glory of all, *blessed be the Lord.* The tribute of praise ariseth out of Zion, all God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he dwelleth in Jerusalem, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. And the condescensions of his grace in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

P S A L M CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composition of it; for the latter half of each verse is the same repeated throughout the psalm, for his mercy endureth for ever, and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed that such burdens, or keepings as we call them, add very much to the beauty of a song, and help to make it moving and affecting: nor can any verse contain more weighty matter, or more worthy to be thus repeated than this, that God's mercy endureth for ever; and the repetition of it here twenty-six times intimates, 1. That God's mercies to his people are thus repeated and drawn, as it were with a continuando from the beginning to the end, with a progress and advance in infinitum. 2. That in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still, the same now that it has been, and enduring for ever, the same always that it is. 3. That the everlasting continuance of the mercy of God is very much his honour, and that which he glories in, and very much the saints comfort and that which they glory in. It is that which therefore our hearts should be full of, and greatly affected with, so as that the most frequent mention of it, instead of cloying us, should raise us the more, because it will be the subject of our praise to all eternity. This most excellent sentence that God's mercy endureth for ever, is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the signal tokens of divine acceptance, with which God owned the signing of it both in Solomon's time, 2 Chron. v. 13, when they sang these words, for his mercy endureth for ever, the house was filled with a cloud; and in Jehoshaphat's time, when they sang these words God gave them victory, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22, which should make us love to sing, His mercies sure do still endure, eternally. We must praise God, (1.) As great and good in himself, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) As the Creator of the world, *ver. 5-9.* (3.) As Israel's God and Saviour, *ver. 10-22.* (4.) As our redeemer, *ver. 23, 24.* (5.) As the great Benefactor of the whole creation, and God over all the blessed for evermore, *ver. 25, 26.*

1. Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. 3. O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. 4. To him who alone doth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. 5. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. 6. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. 7. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever. 8. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever. 9. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The duty we are here again and again called to, is to give thanks, to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but

the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name, *Heb. xiii. 15.* We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent, as to give thanks; for it is the will of God that we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven.

Now here observe,

1. Whom we must give thanks to, to him that we receive all good from, to the Lord, Jehovah, Israel's God, *ver. 1. the God of gods,* the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended deities are and shall be conquered, *ver. 2. to the Lord of lords,* the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the Stay and Supporter of all supports, *ver. 3.* In all our adorations we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as incontestibly and uncontrollably supreme.

2. What we must give thanks for; not as the pharisee that made all his thanksgiving terminate in his own praise, *God, I thank thee, that I am so* and so; but directing them all to God's glory.

1. We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy, *ver. 1. Give thanks to the Lord,* not only because he doth good, but because he is good, all the streams must be run up to the fountain, not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endureth for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

2. We must give God thanks for the influences of his power and wisdom. In general, *ver. 4. he alone doth great wonders.* The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance wonderful, being put in execution by infinite power. He alone doth marvellous things, *i. e.* None but he can do such things, and he doth them without the assistance or advice of any other.

More particularly, 1. He made the heavens and stretched them out, and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences; as long as the heavens endure, the mercy of God, endures in them, *ver. 5.* 2. He raised the earth out of the waters, when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man; and therein also his mercy to man still endures, *ver. 6. for the earth hath he given to the children of men,* and all its products. 3. Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* These are called the great lights, because they appear so to us, for otherwise astronomers tell us, that the moon is less than many of the stars, but being nearer to the earth, it seems much bigger. They are said to rule, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, *Luke xxii. 5.* But the empire is divided, one rules by day, the other by night, at least the stars, and yet all are subject to God's direction and dispose. Those rulers which the Gentiles therefore idolized, are the world's servants and God's subjects; *Sun stand thou still, and thou moon.*

10. To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy endureth for ever. 11. And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever. 12. With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever. 13. To him which divided the Red-sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever. 14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it, for his mercy endureth for ever. 15. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red-sea: for his mercy endureth for ever. 16. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever. 17. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever. 18. And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever. 19. Shilon, king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever. 20. And Og, the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever. 21. And gave their land for an heritage; for his mercy endureth for ever. 22. Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the psalms, as instances both of the power of God, and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See *Psalms cxxxv. 8, &c.*

1. He brought them out of Egypt, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* That was a mercy which endureth long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, doth indeed endure for ever; for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that God, who in all the plagues distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them; not by a vile but with a strong hand, and an arm stretched out to reach far and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, *Exod. xx. 2.*

2. He forced them a way through the Red sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to controul the common course of nature, he divided the sea into two parts, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now they were to enter into covenant with him (see *Jer. xxxiv. 18.*) he not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red sea that was a lane to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness, *ver. 16.* there he led them and fed them; and their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, was the more observable, because they often provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert.

He destroyed kings before them to make room for them, *ver. 17, 18.* not deposed and banished them; but smote and slew them, in which appeared his wrath against them; but his mercy, his never failing mercy to Israel. And that which magnified it was, that they were great kings, and famous kings, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least and weakest and meanest of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their

their grandeur and lust would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were, the more does God's mercy to Israel appear in giving such kings for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the two first that were conquered on the other side Jordan, *ver.* 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and not to view them in the gross; and in each instance to observe and own that God's mercy endureth for ever.

5. He put them in possession of a good land, *ver.* 21, 22. He, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another, as pleased him. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and therefore it was taken from them; Israel was his servant, and though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have some service out of them, for to them pertained the service of God. As he said to the Egyptians, *Let my people go*, so to the Canaanites, *let my people in*, that they may serve me. In this God's mercy to them endureth for ever, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

23. Who remembered us in our low state: for his mercy endureth for ever. 24. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. 25. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. 26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated,

1. In the redemption of his church, *ver.* 23, 24. In the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church, out of the hands of their oppressors; when in the years of their servitude their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David at length by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies: But especially, in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, *He remembered us*, the children of men, in our low estate, in our lost state, for his mercy endureth for ever: And sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies; for his mercy endureth for ever: us, and not the angels that sinned; for his mercy endureth for ever.

2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures, *ver.* 15, *He gave food to all flesh*. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that wherever he has given life, he gives food agreeable and sufficient; and he is a good housekeeper, that provides for so large a family.

3. In all his glories, and all his gifts, *ver.* 26. *Give thanks to the God of heaven*; that speaks him a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises; the riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy, *Rom.* ix. 23. And it speaks him a great benefactor, for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights, the God of heaven, and we should trace every stream to the fountain; this and that particular mercy may perhaps endure for a while, but the mercy that is in God endures for ever; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

P S A L M CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was near expiring, and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up; but none of them appears so plainly to be of late date, as this here, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors; probably it was towards the latter end of their captivity; for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace, *ver.* 8, which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint make it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, 1. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, *ver.* 1, 2. 2. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, *ver.* 3, 4. 3. They cannot forget Jerusalem, *ver.* 5, 6. 4. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. In singing this psalm, we must be much affected with the concernments of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church, and the ruin of its enemies in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the leaven of malice with our sacrifices.

1. **B**Y the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof. 3. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song: and they that wasted us, required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? 5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. 6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears; but sowing in tears. Observe,

1. The mournful posture they were in; their affairs were so, and so were their spirits.

(1.) They were posted by the rivers of Babylon, in a strange land, a great way off of their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war; the land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them by the rivers, with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their galleys; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there, *Jer.* xxix. 5. it shall not be in the cities, the places of concourse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the river Chebar, *Ezek.* i. 3. others by the river Ulai, *Dan.* viii. 2.

(2.) There they sat down to indulge their grief by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under his yoke to sit alone, and keep silence, and put their mouths in the dust, *Lam.* iii. 28, 29. *We sat down*, as those that expected to say, and were content since it is the will of God, it must be so.

(3.) Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes; and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are sometimes put to by a trouble that

surpriseth us, but they were deliberate tears, we sat down and wept: tears with consideration: *We wept when we remembered Zion*, the holy hill on which the temple was built; their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory, and the satisfaction they had had in Zion's courts, *Lam.* i. 7. *Jerusalem remembered in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old*, *Psal.* xlii. 4. They remembered Zion's present desolations, and favoured the dust thereof, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, *Psal.* cii. 13, 14.

(4.) They laid by their instruments of music, *ver.* 2. *We hanged our harps upon the willows*. 1. The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment; these they laid aside, both because it was their judgment that they ought not to use them now God called to weeping and mourning, *Isa.* xxii. 12. and their spirits were so sad, that they had no hearts to use them; they brought their harps with them, designing perhaps to use them for the alleviation of their grief, but it proved so great that it would not admit the experiment; music makes some people melancholy: *As vinegar upon nitre; so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart*. 2. The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites harps; these they did not throw away, being in hopes that they might yet again have occasion to use them, but they threw them by, because they had no present use for them; God has cut them out other work, by turning their feasting into mourning, and their songs into lamentations, *Amos* viii. 10. Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks, but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet, perhaps they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season, it is his will that we should in every thing give thanks, *Isa.* xxiv. 15, 16.

2. The abuses which their enemies put upon them when they were in this melancholy condition, *ver.* 3. They had carried them away captive, from their own land, and then wasted them in the land of their captivity; took what little they had from them: but this was not enough, to complicate their woes, they insulted over them, they required of us mirth and a song. Now, (1.) This was very barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy in misery is to be pitied and not trampled upon. It argues a base and sordid spirit to upbraid those that are in distress, either with their former joys or with their present griefs, or to challenge those to be merry, who we know are out of tune for it; this is adding affliction to the afflicted. (2.) It was very profane and impious; no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, with which God had been honoured; so that in this demand, they reflected upon God himself; as Belshazzar, when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies mocked at their sabbaths, *Lam.* i. 7.

3. The patience wherewith they bore their abuses, *ver.* 4. They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no not to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they lay; would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast before swine; David prudently kept silence even from good, when the wicked were before him, who he knew would ridicule what he said, and make a jest of it, *Psal.* xxxix. 1, 2. The reason they gave is very mild and pious: *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* They do not say, *How shall we sing when we are so much in sorrow?* If that had been all, they might perhaps have put a force upon themselves, so far as to oblige their masters with a song: but it is the Lord's song, it is a sacred thing. It is peculiar to the temple service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger among idolaters. We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured with religious silence, as well as by religious speaking.

4. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love in it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, *ver.* 5, 6. Observe, 1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem. (1.) Their heads were full of it; it was always in their minds, they remembered it, they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it; many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the Scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers they opened their windows towards Jerusalem, and how then could they forget it? (2.) Their hearts were full of it; they preferred it above their chief joy, and therefore they remembered it, and could not forget it. What we love, we love to think of. They that rejoice in God, do for his sake make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, i. e. which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How steadfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall: Let me be for ever disabled either to sing or play on the harp, if I so far forget the religion of my country, as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons, or the praising of Babylon's gods: *Let my right hand forget her art*, (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it were withered) *say, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth*, if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem wherever I am. Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem: who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. 8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her impenitent, implacable enemies; but this not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the honour of his kingdom.

1. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with (and all others) that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that helped forward the affliction, *Zech.* i. 15. and triumphed in it; that said in the day of Jerusalem, the day of her judgment, *Rase it, rase it to the foundations*; down with it, down with it, do not leave one stone upon another. Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already

already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off, when their next neighbours had such an ill will to them. And all this was as a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: *Lord, remember them*, saith the psalmist; which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who hath said, *Vengeance is mine*. Note, They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. They that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

2. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too, to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it, *ver. 8, 9*. *O daughter of Babylon*, as proud and secure as thou art, we know very well by the scriptures of truth, *thou art to be destroyed*; or as Dr. Hammond reads it, *who art the destroyer*. The destroyers shall be destroyed, *Rev. xiii. 10*. and perhaps it is with reference to this that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a *son of perdition*, *2 Thess. ii. 3*. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction, *thou art to be destroyed*, it is spoken of, 1. As a just destruction: she shall be paid in her own coin: *thou shalt be served as thou hast served us*; as barbarously used by the destroyers, as we have been by thee. See *Rev. xviii. 6*. Let not those expect to find mercy, who when they had power did not shew mercy. 2. As an utter destruction; the very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape, if these little ones perish. Those are the seed of another generation; so that if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem's was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. 3. As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall they be that do it; for they are fulfilling God's counsels, and therefore he calls Cyrus, that did it, his servant, his shepherd, his anointed, *Isa. xlv. 28*. *ver. 1*. and the soldiers that were employed in it, his *sanctified ones*, *Isa. xlii. 3*. And they are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel, and happy they that are any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, *Rev. xix. 1*.

P S A L M CXXXVIII.

It doth not appear, nor is it material to enquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it, 1. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him, ver. 1—3. 2. He looks forwards with comfort, in hopes, (1.) That others would go on to praise God like him, ver. 4, 5. (2.) That God would go on to do good to him, ver. 6, 7, 8. In singing this psalm we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory, and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. I Will praise thee with my whole heart, before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2. I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name, for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD: when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the LORD.

1. How he would praise God; compare *Psalms cxi. 1*.

(1.) He will praise him with sincerity and zeal: *With my heart, with my whole heart*; with that which is within me, and with all that is within me; with uprightness of intention, and fervency of affection; inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions. (2.) With freedom and boldness: *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee*; before the princes and judges, and great men; either those of other nations that visited him, or those of his own nation that attended him. Even in their presence he will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is a work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. *Before the angels*, so some understand it, i. e. in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, *1 Cor. i. 10*. (3.) In the way that God hath appointed: *I will worship towards thy holy temple*. The priests only went into the temple, the people at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherwards we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God: *Our Father in heaven*.

2. What he would praise God for.

(1.) For the fountain of his comforts; for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth; for thy goodness, and for thy promise; mercy hid in thee, and mercy revealed by thee: that God is a gracious God in himself, and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him: *For thou hast magnified thy word*, i. e. thy promise, which is truth, *above all thy name*. God has made himself known to us many ways, in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation, is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David, his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustrious, and redounded more to his glory than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

(2.) For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, *ver. 3*. He had been in affliction, and he remembers with thankfulness, 1. The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him.

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gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted, and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers. 2. The sweet communications he then had from God; *thou strengthenedst with strength in my soul*. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words. *Psalms xx. 6*. Observe, (1.) It was a speedy answer: *In the day when I cried*. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer, grow rich by quick returns: *While we are yet speaking, God hears*, *Isa. lxv. 24*. (2.) It was a spiritual answer; God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he hath answered us, and are bound to be thankful.

(3.) What influence he hoped his praising God would have upon others, *ver. 4, 5*. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his example, to embrace religion; and if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others; they shall all praise thee; when they visited David, and after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon, as *all the kings of the earth* are expressly said to do, *2 Chron. ix. 23*. they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look farther to the calling of the Gentiles, and the discipling of all nations by the gospel of Christ, of which it is said, *that all kings shall fall down before him*, *Psalms lxxii. 11*. Now it is here foretold, (1.) That the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God. All that came near David should hear them from him, *Psalms cxix. 46*. In the latter days the preachers of the gospel should be sent unto all the world. (2.) That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, *Acts xiii. 48*. (3.) That they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, They that walk in the ways of the Lord, have reason to sing in those ways, i. e. to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them: and if we were so, great is the glory of the Lord. It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those that walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good master, and his work its own wages.

6. Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. 7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me, thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: for-fake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things:

1. The favour God bears to his humble people, *ver. 6*. Though the Lord be high and neither needs any of his creatures nor can be benefited by them, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them, *Isa. lxvii. 1*. *lxvi. 15*, and sooner or later he will put honour upon them, while he knows the proud afar off, knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and bid welcome, that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the Publican, *Luke xviii*.

2. The care God takes of his afflicted, oppressed people, *ver. 7*. David, though a great and good man, expects to walk in the midst of trouble, but encourageth himself with hope, 1. That God would comfort him. When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, thou shalt revive me, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles. Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. 2. That he would protect him, and plead his cause. Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand, though not against mine enemies, to destroy them, yet against the wrath of mine enemies, to restrain that and set bounds to it. 3. That he would in due time work deliverance for him: Thy right hand shall save me. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those that serve him.

3. The assurance we have that whatever good work God has begun in and for his people, he will perform it, *ver. 8*. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me, i. e. that which is most needful for me, and he knows best what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us, *Matt. vi. 32*. and he will order them for the best. 2. That which we are most concerned about: every good man is most concerned about his duty to God, and his happiness in God; that the former may be faithfully done, and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, *Phil. i. 6*. Observe,

(1.) What ground the psalmist builds his confidence upon. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. This he had made very much the matter of his praise, *Psalms xlii. 6*. and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope: For if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere, must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, *Lord thy mercy endureth for ever*; let me be for ever a monument of it. (2.) What use he makes of this confidence; it doth not supersede, but quicken prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition; For-fake not, do not let go the work of thine own hands. Lord, I am the work of thine own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me: my concerns are so, do not lay by the care of them. Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands; he works us both to will and to do, it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end, that we may in faith pray, Lord do not forsake it. Whom he loves he loves to the end: and as for God, his work is perfect.

P S A L M CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David; and a very pious devout meditation it is upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon, and filled with; in singing this psalm. 1. This doctrine is here asserted and fully laid down, ver. 1--6. 2. It is confirmed by two arguments. (1.) God is every where present; therefore he knows all, ver. 7--12. (2.) He made us, therefore he knows us, ver. 13--16. 3. Some inferences are drawn from this doctrine. (1.) It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, ver. 17, 18. (2.) With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, ver. 19--22. (3.) With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity concerning which we may appeal to God, ver. 23, 24. This great and self-evident truth, that God knows our hearts, and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it, and seriously consider it, and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness, and upon our comfort.

To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **O** LORD thou hast searched me and known me. 2. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, that the God with whom we have to do, has a perfect knowledge of us; and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and of our outward man, are naked and open before him.

1. He lays down this doctrine in the way of an address to God; he saith it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over, as when they are preached over: and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

2. He lays it down in a way of application to himself: Not thou hast known all, but thou hast known me; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider: Then we know those things for our good, when we know them for ourselves, Job v. 27. when we acknowledge, Lord, all souls are thine, we must add, my soul is thine: thou that hatest all sin, hatest my sin; that art good to all, good to Israel, art good me. So here, thou hast searched me, and known me, i. e. known me as thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into. David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unspeakable to their subjects, Prov. xiv. 3. but they are not so to their sovereign.

3. He descends to particulars: Thou knowest me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing; me, and all that belongs to me.

1. Thou knowest me and all my motions, my down-sitting to rest, my up-rising to work, with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down, and stir up myself when I rise up; what my soul repose itself in as its stay and support: what it aims at, and reacheth towards, as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go. 2. Thou knowest all my imaginations: nothing more close and quick than thought, it is always unknown to others, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Though my thoughts be never so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connection, when so many of them slip my notice that I myself cannot. Or, thou understandest them afar off, even before I think them, and not long after I have thought them, and have myself forgotten them. Or thou understandest them from afar, from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart, Psal. xxxiii. 14. (3.) Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings; thou compassest every particular path; thou sittest, or winnowest my path (so some) so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do, as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment of God, Psal. xvii. 3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step; He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them; he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk towards, what company we walk with. 4. Thou knowest me in all my retirements; thou knowest my lying down; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day, and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart, and with what thoughts I go to bed. 5. Thou knowest me, and all I say, ver. 4. There is not a word in my tongue, not a vain word, not a good word, but thou knowest it altogether; knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it. When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord, thou knowest all; so some read it; for thoughts are words to God. 6. Thou knowest me in every part of me; Thou hast beset me behind and before, so that go which way I will, I am under thine eye, and cannot escape it any way possible; Thou hast laid thine hand upon me, and I cannot outrun thee; Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps, it is an allusion to the physician laying his hand upon his patient, to feel how his pulse beats, or what temper he is in. God knows us as we know not only what we see, but what we feel, and have our hands upon. All his saints are in his hand.

4. He speaks of it with admiration, ver. 6. It is too wonderful for me; it is high, i. e. 1. Thou hast such a knowledge of me, as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me. 2. It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell. We cannot by searching find out how God searcheth and finds us out; nor do we know how we are known.

7. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8. If I ascend up into

heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: 10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. 12. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are bold alike to thee. 13. For thou hast possessed my reins; thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. 15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret: and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is therefore sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways.

1. Because he is always under his eye; If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient: but he is omnipresent; this supposeth the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both, Jer. xxxiii. 24. he doth not only know both, and govern both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledgeth this also with application, and sees himself thus open before God.

(1.) No sight can remove us out of God's presence. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? from thy presence? i. e. from thy spiritual presence, from thyself who art a spirit. God is a spirit, and therefore it is folly to think that because we cannot see him he cannot see us: Whither shall I flee from thy presence? Not that he did desire to go away from God: no, he desired nothing more than to be near him; but he only puts the case, Suppose I should be such a fool as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee: Suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, by disowning a dependence upon thee, and shifting for myself; alas, Whither can I go? A heathen could say, Quocumque te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi. Seneca.

He instances in the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them. 1. In heaven; If I ascend thither, as I hope to do shortly, thou art there; and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there. Heaven is a vast large place replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there, in any corner, or any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God, and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this. 2. In hell; in Sheol; which may be understood either of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it; should we dig as deep as we can underground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or, of the state of the dead; when we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God; from his eye we cannot hide us in the grave. Or, of the place of the damned; If I make my bed in hell (an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames) behold thou art there, in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, Rev. xiv. 10. 3. In the remotest corners of this world: If I take the wings of the morning, the rays of the morning light, (called the wings of the sun, Mal. iv. 2.) than which nothing more swift, and flee upon them to the uttermost parts of the sea, or of the earth, Job xxxviii. 12, 13. Should I flee to the utmost distant and obscure islands, (the ultima Thule, the Terra incognita) I should find thee there; there shall thy hand lead me, as far as I go, and thy right hand shall hold me, that I can go no farther, that I cannot go out of thy reach. God soon arrested Jonah, when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

(2.) No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not that of the thickest darkness, ver. 11, 12. If I say, yet the darkness shall cover me, when nothing else will; alas! I find myself deceived, the curtains of the evening will stand me in no more stead than the wings of the morning; even the night shall be light about me. That which often favours the escape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat of a beaten army, yet will do me no kindness in fleeing from thee: When God divided between the light and darkness, it was with a reservation of this prerogative, that to himself the darkness and the light should still be both alike. The darkness darkeneth not from thee, for there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious so ever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villanies.

2. Because he is the work of his hands: he that framed the engine, knows all the motions of it: God made us, and therefore no doubt he knows us; he saw us when we were in the forming, and can we be hid from him now we are formed? This argument he insists upon, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. Thou hast possessed my reins, i. e. thou art master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul; thou not only knowest but governest them, at we do that which we have possession of; and the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, for thou coveredst me in my mother's womb, i. e. thou madest me, Job x. 11. thou madest me a secret; the soul is concealed from all about us; Who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man? 1 Cor. ii. 11. hence we read of the hidden man of the heart. But it was God himself that thus covered us, and therefore he can when he pleaseth discover us; when he hid us from all eyes, he did not intend to hide us from himself.

Concerning the formation of man, of each of us: (1.) The glory of it is here given to God, intirely to him? for it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. I will praise thee, the author of my being; my parents were only the instruments of it. It was done, 1. Under the divine inspection: My substance, when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but in fœtus, an unshapen embryo, was not hid from thee, thine eyes did see my substance. 2. By the divine operation: As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us; we were his work. 3. According to the divine

divine model. *In thy book all my members were written.* Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

(2.) Glorious things are here said concerning it: the generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration, as his creation at first. Consider it, 1. As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. We are *fearfully and wonderfully made*; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the compofure of every part, and the harmony of all together. 2. As a great mystery; a mystery of nature; *My soul knows right well*, that it is marvellous, but how to describe it I know not, for any one else; *for I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the womb, as in the lowest parts of the earth*; so privately, and so far out of sight. 3. As a great mercy; that all our members *in continuance were fashioned*, according as they were written in the book of God's wife counsel, *when as yet there was none of them*; or, as some read it, *and none of them was left out*. If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they had been wanting in our bodies, but through his goodness we have all our limbs and senses, the want of any of which might have made us burdens to ourselves. See what reason have we then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude, that he who saw our substance when it was unfashioned, sees it now it is fashioned.

17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! 18. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with thee. 19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22. I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies. 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. 24. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience divers ways.

1. He acknowledgeth with wonder and thankfulness the care God had taken of him all his days, ver. 17, 18. God that knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts towards him were thoughts of love: *thoughts of good, and not evil*, Jer. xxiv. 11. God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, Jer. xxxi. 28. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare, have been, 1. Precious to admiration. *How precious are they!* They are deep in themselves, such as cannot possibly be fathomed and comprehended; Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about us for our good, quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us above any other thoughts. 2. Numerous to admiration. *How great is the sum of them?* We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us; how many good turns he has done us; and what variety of mercies we have received from him. *If we should count them*, the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, *they are more in number than the sand*, and yet every one great and very considerable, Psalm xl. 5. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are new every morning. 3. Constant at all times. *When I awake, every morning, I am still with thee*, under thine eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection. This speaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him; *when I awake, I am with thee*, in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long, if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him, and we did then set him before us.

2. He concludes from this doctrine, that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it: *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God*; for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world; however thou suffer them to prosper for a while, *surely thou wilt slay them at last*. Now observe, 1. The reason why God will punish them; because they daringly affront him and set him at defiance, ver. 20. *They speak against thee wickedly*; they set their mouths against the heavens, Psalm lxxiii. 9. and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, Jer. 15. They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by taking his name in vain, as we shew our contempt of a man, if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying, by using them in an impertinent, irreverent manner, take God's name in vain, and thereby shew themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites; they speak of thee for mischief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is with some ill design for a cloak of maliciousness; and being enemies to God while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain, i. e. they swear falsely. 2. The use David makes of this prospect he has of the ruin of the wicked. (1.) He desires them: *depart from me, ye bloody men*, i. e. ye shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship nor have fellowship with you, and you cannot destroy me; for being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me. (2.) He detests them, ver. 21, 22. *Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; Do not I hate them that hate thee?* and for that reason, because they hate thee? and therefore I hate them because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. *Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?* grieved to see their rebellion, and to foresee their ruin which it will certainly end in? Note, Sin is hated, and sinners lamented by all that fear God. *I hate them*, i. e. I hate the work of them that turn aside, as he explains himself Psalm ci. 3. *with a sincere and perfect hatred*; I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them, Psalm lxxix. 9.

3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, ver. 23, 24.

(1.) He desires that as far as he was in the wrong God would discover it to him. They that are upright can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with an humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves; for a good man desires to know the worst by himself, and to discover them to others: He that means honestly, could wish he had a window in his breast, that any man may look into his heart. *Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way,*

but see if there be any wicked way in me, any corrupt inclination remaining; but let me see it, and root it out of me, for I do not allow it.

(2.) He desires that as far as he was in the right he might be forwarded in it, which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually; *Lead me in the way everlasting*. Note, 1. The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is everlastingly true and good; pleasing to God, and profitable to us; and will end in everlasting life. *It is the way of antiquity*, so some; the good old way. 2. All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

PSALM CXL.

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we meet with in the beginning and middle of the book of Psalms, but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul: one of them is said to be his prayer when he was in the cave, and it is probable all the rest were penned about the same time. In this Psalm, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, ver. 1-5. 2. He encourageth himself in God as his God, ver. 6, 7. 3. He prays for, and prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 8-11. 4. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well, ver. 12, 13. with which assurance we must comfort ourselves and one another, in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief Musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **D**ELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man. 2. Which imagine mischiefs in their heart: continually are they gathered together for war. 3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders poison is under their lips. Selah. 4. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked, preserve me from the violent man who hath purposed to overthrow my goings. 5. The proud have hid a snare for me, and coils, they have spread a net by the way-side: they have set gins for me. Selah. 6. I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplication, O LORD. 7. O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation; thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

In this as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that suffered before he reigned, was persecuted before he was exalted, and as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many that hated him and intended his ruin, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by the verses where.

1. He gives a character of his enemies, and puts them in their own colours, as dangerous men, that he had reason to be afraid of, but that he had no reason to think the righteous God would count as evil. There was one that seems to have been the chief of them, whom he calls the evil man, and the man of violence, ver. 1-7. probably, he means Saul: the Chaldee paraphrast, ver. 9. names both Doeg and Abimelech; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many besides this one that were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For, 1. They were very subtil, crafty to do mischief; they have imagined it, ver. 2. have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They have purposed and plotted to overthrow the goings of a good man, ver. 4. to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. To this purpose they have like mighty hunters, hid a snare, and spread a net, and set gins, ver. 5. that their designs against him being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable: but the Lord preserveth the simple without all those arts. 2. They are very spiteful: as full of malice as Satan himself: *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent*, that insueth his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say, that one would think there were nothing under their lips, but adders poison, ver. 3. With their calumnies and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass: and they endeavoured likewise to insinuate their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. 2. They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all gathered together against me for war, ver. 2. They that can agree in nothing else, can agree to persecute a good man; Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Babelzebub. 4. They are proud, ver. 6. conceited of themselves, and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement of the persecuted, for the more haughtily they are, the farther they are ripening for ruin. *Pride goes before destruction*.

2. He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them. *Lord, deliver me, preserve me, keep me*, ver. 1-4. let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. *Keep me* from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I will do. Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection: In him bellerers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

3. He triumphs in God, and thereby in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, ver. 5, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No, *adders poison was under their lips*, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger through the malice of his enemies; and it is well for us we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, 1. In his interest

terest in God. *I said thou art my God*; and if my God, then my shield and mighty protector. In troublous dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. 2. In his access to God. This comforted him, not only that he was taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say with an humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord*. 3. In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him. *O God the Lord, Jehovah, Adonai*; as Jehovah thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as Adonai thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor; and therefore *the strength of my salvation*, i. e. my strong saviour; nay, not only my saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom my salvation is; not only a strong saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hopes is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness. 4. In the experience he had formerly of God's care of him. *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle*. As he pleaded with Saul, that for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God, that in those services he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was. Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites. God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him, and depend upon him, in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. 10. Let burning coals fall upon them, let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. 13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had,

1. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

(1.) Their disappointment; this he prays for, ver. 8. that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge: *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked*, but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but *hear the voice of my supplications*. That their projects might not take effect, but be blasted; *O further not his wicked device*; let not providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer not his wicked device to proceed, but scotch his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits. Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprizes; such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves*; value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men when they prosper are made prouder, grow more impudent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, Lord, do not prosper them.

(2.) Their destruction. This he prays for, (as we read it) but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

1. Of his own enemies. *As for those that compass me about*, and seek my ruin, (1.) *The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads*, ver. 9. i. e. the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin, *Psal. vii. 15, 16*. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been necessary, to shall be made to return upon themselves. (2.) The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to *burning coals*, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom: nay, as in the deluge, the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have *burning coals* cast upon them from above, *Job xx. 23. xxvii. 22*. but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge, and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which, perhaps, they might escape, but a *deep pit*, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, *Isa. xxx. 33*.

2. Of all others that are like them, ver. 11. (1.) *Evil speakers* must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs. *Psal. ii. 5*. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the lip of truth shall be established for ever. (2.) Evil Doeg must expect to be destroyed: *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces; mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin, the destruction appointed shall run them down, and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners*.

3. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, ver. 12, 13. (1.) God will do them justice in delivering them, who being wronged commit themselves to him. *I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people*, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but the right of the poor, who have but little that they can pretend a right to. God is and will be the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; they that know him, cannot but know this. (2.) They will do him justice, (if I may so speak) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him. *Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name*, when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosecuted with effect. The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence*, include both God's favour to them, thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace

here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness, and their duty to God; they shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their master, both to do them honour, and to receive their commands. This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

P S A L M CXLI.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; it is most likely pursued by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray: David did so, and had the comfort of it. 1. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, ver. 1, 2. 2. For his powerful assistance, ver. 3, 4. 3. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, ver. 5, 6. 4. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, ver. 7-10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. LORD, I cry unto thee, make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips. 4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

1. David was in love with prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, ver. 1, 2. *David cried unto God*; his crying notes fervency in prayer: he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God notes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? (1.) That God would take cognizance of it, *give ear to my voice*; let me have a gracious audience; they that cry in prayer, may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness but for their liveliness. (2.) That he would visit him upon it, *make haste unto me*. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence, will be importunate for it, and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes doth not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. 3. That, he would be well pleased with him in it; well pleased with his praying and the lifting up of his hands in prayer; which notes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the out-goings of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart; and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best affections to God; now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God; as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he instances in rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps, because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who in the evening of the world and in the evening of the day was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment; having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. They that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or a bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet smelling favour to God, as incense, which yet had no favour without fire; nor has prayer without the favour of holy love and fervour.

2. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayer would not be accepted, unless he took care to watch against sin; we must be as earnest for God's grace in us, as for his favour towards us.

(1.) He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words, ver. 3. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth*, and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out, which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others. Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them; when enemies are provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing no watchfulness or resolution of their own, is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouth as with a bridle, but that will not serve, we must pray to God to keep them; Nehemiah prayed to the Lord then when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh in vain.

(2.) That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices, ver. 4. *Incline not mine heart to any evil thing*, i. e. Whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified by divine grace, The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up, and draw out corrupt inclinations, we are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we receive injuries we may return them, and therefore we have need to pray, that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with, or in opposition to the men that work iniquity. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurements, nor driven on by any provocation to do any ill thing.

3. That he might not be enflamed by any sinful pleasures. *Let me not eat of their dainties*. Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins; better is a dinner of herbs out of the way of temptation, than a stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin, *stolen waters are sweet*, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye, but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into worm-wood and gall, how certainly it will at last bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder; will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn their stomachs (as I may say) against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which

which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. 6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. 7. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. 8. But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust: leave not my soul destitute. 9. Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Here, 1. David desires to be told of his faults; his enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of, yet at the same time he desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there were any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches, ver. 5. *let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* The righteous God, (so some) I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them, that I will receive them as tokens of love, and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble. But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous, to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them it will be best taken: But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it, and learn obedience by it. But the reproofs of the righteous and wise, we are here taught how to receive. (1.) We must desire to be reprov'd for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us. Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart doth not smite me, as it ought, let my friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgement of being let alone in sin. (2.) We must account it a piece of friendship; we must not only bear it patiently but take it as a kindness, for reproofs of instruction are the way of life, Prov. vi. 23. are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Reproofs, though they cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy, Prov. xxviii. 6. for the flog of fools, Eccl. vii. 5. David blessed God for Abigail's reasonable admonition, 1 Sam. xxi. 32. (3.) We must reckon ourselves helped and healed by it; *shall be as an excellent oil to a wound*, to mollify it, and close it up; *it shall not break my head*, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broke, as to be told of their faults, but saith David, I am not of that mind: it is my sin that has broke my head, that has broke my bones, Psalm li. 8. The reproof is an excellent oil to cure the bruises sin has given me. It shall not break my head, if it may but help to break my heart. (4.) We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must shew that we took it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse, *reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head*, i. e. shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain.

2. David hopes his persecutors will some time or other bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his, ver. 6. *when their judges (Saul and his officers that judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges) when they are overthrown in stony places, among the rocks in the wilderness, then they shall hear my words for they are sweet.* Some think this refers to the relentings that were in Saul's breast, when he said with tears, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* 1 Sam. xiv. 16. xxvi. 21. Or we may take it more generally: even judges, as great as they are, may come to be overthrown; those that make the greatest figure in this world, do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

3. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced, ver. 7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth*, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit, and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. *As one that cuts and cleaves the earth*, so some read it, alluding to the ploughman that tears the earth in pieces with his ploughshare. Psalm cxxxix. 3. *Can these dry bones live?*

4. David cast himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance. *But mine eyes are unto thee*, ver. 8. for when the case is never so deplorable thou canst redress all the grievances, from thee I expect relief as bad as things are, and in thee is my trust. Those that have their eye towards God, may have their hopes in him.

5. He prays that God would succour and relieve him, as his necessity required. (1.) That he would comfort him, *leave not my soul desolate and destitute*: Still let me see where my help is. (2.) That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him, ver. 9. *Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me*; give me to discover it, and to evade it. Be the gin placed with never so much subtilty, God can, and will secure his people from being taken in it. (3.) That God would in justice turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and in mercy deliver him from being ruined by them, ver. 10. *Let the wicked fall into their own net*, the net which intentionally they procured for me; but which meritoriously they prepared for themselves, *Nec lex est justior ulla, quam nubi artifice, arte perire sua*. All that are bound over to God's justice, are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes proves the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

P S A L M CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and afterwards penned it in this form. Here is, 1. The complaint he makes to God, ver. 1, 2. of the subtilty, strength, and malice of his enemies, ver. 3-6. and the coldness and indifference of his friends, ver. 4. 2. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, ver. 3. and was his refuge, ver. 5. 3. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, ver. 6, 7. 4. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in praises, ver. 7. Those that are troubled in

mind, body or estate, may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit) both warrant his complaints, and fetch in his comforts.

MASCHIL OF DAVID; a prayer when he was in the cave.

1. I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked, have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of Engedi, that David prayed this prayer, is not material: it is plain he was in distress; it was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such mean shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so hotly pursued, and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind as to pray this prayer, and wherever he was, still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers, and our souls in prayer to God. He calls this prayer Maschil, a psalm of instruction, because of the good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others.

In these verses observe,

1. How David complained to God, ver. 1, 2. When the danger was over he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and cry like children to their parents when any thing frightens them. David poured out his complaint, which notes a free and full complaint, he was large and particular in it. His heart was as full of its grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency, *He cried unto the Lord with his voice*, with the voice of his mind (so some think) for being hid in the cave he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should have discovered him; but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot or dare not be uttered, Rom. vii. 26. Two things David laid open to God in this complaint;

(1.) His distress; he exhibited a remembrance or memorial of his case; *I shewed before him my trouble*, and all the circumstances of it. He did not preferre to God, nor shew him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his shewing, but as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him, he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to shew our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which doth us no kindness, whereas by shewing it to God we might cast the care upon him, who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves: Nor should we allow of any complaints to ourselves and others which we cannot with the due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

(2.) His desire. When he made his complaint, he made his supplication, ver. 1. Not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainants must be supplicants, for God will be sought unto.

2. What he complained of. *In the way wherein I walked*, suspecting no danger, have they privily laid a snare for me, to entrap me. Saul gave Michal his daughter to David, on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 Sam. xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with design upon him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares he might have thanked himself; but when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

3. What comforts him in the midst of these complaints, ver. 3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me*, and ready to sink under the burden of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to despair, then thou knewest my path, i. e. then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me; or thou knewest my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spi it was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly shew it, this comforted me that thou knewest it, Job xxiii. 10. Thou knewest it, i. e. thou didst protect, preserve, and secure it, Psal. xxxi. 7. Deut. ii. 7.

4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me, refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5. I cried unto thee, O LORD, I said thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. 6. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors. for they are stronger than I. 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name; the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us for our instruction,

1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, ver. 4. When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an out-law, and it was dangerous for any body to harbour him, witness Ahimelech's fate, then no man would know him, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate, Psalm cix. 31. some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but refuge failed him, none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety; such swallow-friends, how many good men have been deceived by, that are gone when winter comes? David's life was exceeding precious, and yet when he was unjustly proscribed, no man cared for it, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ who in his sufferings for us was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was none to help, none to uphold, Isa. lxiii. 5.

2. How he then found satisfaction in God, ver. 5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them, but I cried unto thee, O Lord, who knowest me, and carest for me, when none else will

terest in God. *I said thou art my God*; and if my God, then my shield and mighty protector. In troublous dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. 2. In his access to God. This comforted him, not only that he was taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say with an humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord*. 3. In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him. *O God the Lord, Jehovah, Adonai*; as Jehovah thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as Adonai thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor; and therefore *the strength of my salvation*, i. e. my strong saviour; nay, not only my saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom my salvation is; not only a strong saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hopes is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness. 4. In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him. *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle*. As he pleaded with Saul, that for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God, that in those services he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was. Lord, thou hast kept me *in the day of battle* with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites. God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him, and depend upon him, in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. 10. Let burning coals fall upon them, let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. 13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had,

1. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

(1.) Their disappointment: this he prays for, ver. 8. that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge: *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked*, but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but *hear the voice of my supplications*. That their projects might not take effect, but be blasted; *O further not his wicked device*; let not providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; *suffer not his wicked device to proceed*, but scotch his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits. Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprizes; such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves*; value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men when they prosper are made prouder, grow more independent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, Lord, do not prosper them.

(2.) Their destruction. This he prays for, (as we read it) but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

1. Of his own enemies. *As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin*, (1.) *The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads*; ver. 9. i. e. the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin, Psalm vii. 15, 16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. (2.) The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to *burning coals*, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom: nay, as in the deluge, the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have *burning coals* cast upon them from above, Job xx. 23. xxvii. 22. but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge, and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which, perhaps, they might escape, but a *deep pit*, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.

2. Of all others that are like them, ver. 11. (1.) *Evil speakers* must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs. Psalm ii. 5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the lip of truth shall be established for ever. (2.) Evil Doeg must expect to be destroyed: *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces; mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin, the destruction appointed shall run them down, and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners*.

3. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, ver. 12, 13. (1.) God will do them justice in delivering them, who being wronged commit themselves to him. *I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people*, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but the right of the poor, who have but little that they can pretend a right to. God is and will be the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; they that know him, cannot but know this. (2.) They will do him justice, (if I may so speak) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him. *Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name*, when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosecuted with effect. The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence*, include both God's favour to them, than shall admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace

here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness, and their duty to God; they shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their master, both to do them honour, and to receive their commands. This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

P S A L M CXL.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; it is most likely pursued by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray: David did so, and had the comfort of it. 1. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, ver. 1, 2. 2. For his powerful assistance, ver. 3, 4. 3. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, ver. 5, 6. 4. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, ver. 7-10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. LORD, I cry unto thee, make haste unto me; 2. Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 3. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 4. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips. 5. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

1. David was in love with prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, ver. 1, 2. *David cried unto God*; his crying notes fervency in prayer: he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God notes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? (1.) That God would take cognizance of it, *give ear to my voice*; let me have a gracious audience; they that cry in prayer, may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness but for their liveliness. (2.) That he would visit him upon it, *make haste unto me*. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence, will be importunate for it, and humbly impatient of delay. He that believes doth not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. 3. That he would be well pleased with him in it; well pleased with his praying and the lifting up of his hands in prayer; which notes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the out-going of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart; and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best affections to God; now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God; as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he instances in rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps, because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who in the evening of the world and in the evening of the day was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. They that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or a bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet had no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the favour of holy love and fervour.

2. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayer would not be accepted, unless he took care to watch against sin; we must be as earnest for God's grace in us, as for his favour towards us.

(1.) He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words, ver. 3. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth*, and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out, which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others. Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them; when enemies are provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing no watchfulness or resolution of their own, is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouth as with a bridle, but that will not serve, we must pray to God to keep them; Nehemiah prayed to the Lord then when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh in vain.

(2.) That he might not be inclined to any evil thing, i. e. Whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified by divine grace. The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up, and draw out corrupt inclinations, we are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we receive injuries we may return them, and therefore we have need to pray, that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with, or in opposition to the men that work iniquity. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurements, nor driven on by any provocations to do any ill thing.

3. That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures. *Let me not eat of their dainties*. Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sin; better is a dinner of herbs out of the way of temptation, than a stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin, *stolen waters are sweet*, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye, but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into worm-wood and gall, how certainly it will at last bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder; will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn their stomachs (as I may say) against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which

which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. 6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. 7. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. 8. But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust: leave not my soul destitute. 9. Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Here, 1. David desires to be told of his faults; his enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of, yet at the same time he desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there were any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches, ver. 5. *let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* The righteous God, (so some) I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them, that I will receive them as tokens of love, and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble. But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous, to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them it will be best taken: it is the reproof he just, though the reprover be not so, we must receive it as a good use of it, and learn obedience by it. But the reproofs of the righteous and wise, we are here taught how to receive. (1.) We must desire to be reprov'd for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us. Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart doth not *smite me*, as it ought, let a friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgement of being set alone in sin. (2.) We must account it a piece of friendship; we must not only bear it patiently but make it as a kindness, for reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Prov. vi. 23. are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Reproofs, though they cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy. Prov. xxviii. 6. for the song of fools, Eccl. vii. 5. David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, 1 Sam. xxi. 32. (3.) We must reckon our sins helped and healed by it; *shall be as an excellent oil to a wound*, to mollify it, and close it up; *it shall not break my head*, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broken, as to be told of their faults, but said David, I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broke my head, that has broke my bones, Psalm li. 8. The reproof is an excellent oil to cure the bruises sin has given me. It shall not break my head, if it may but help to break my heart. (4.) We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must shew that we took it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse, *reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head*, i. e. shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain.

2. David hopes his persecutors will some time or other bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his, ver. 6. *when their judges* (Saul and his officers that judged and condemned David, and would themselves be smitten) when they are overthrown in stony places, among the rocks in the wilderness, then they shall hear my words for they are sweet. Some think this refers to the relentings that were in Saul's breast, when he said with tears, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* 1 Sam. xiv. 16. xxvi. 21. Or we may take it more generally: even judges, as great as they are, may come to be overthrown: those that make the greatest figure in this world, do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

3. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced, ver. 7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth*, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit, and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. *As one that cuts and cleaves the earth*, so some read it, alluding to the ploughman that tears the earth in pieces with his ploughshare. Psalm cxxxix. 3. *Can these dry bones live?*

4. David cast himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance. *But mine eyes are unto thee*, ver. 8. for when the case is never so deplorable thou canst redress all the grievances, from thee I expect relief as bad as things are, and in thee is my trust. Those that have their eye towards God, may have their hopes in him.

5. He prays that God would succour and relieve him, as his necessity required. (1.) That he would comfort him, *leave not my soul desolate and destitute*: Still let me see where my help is. (2.) That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him, ver. 9. *Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me*; give me to discover it, and to evade it. Be the gin placed with never so much subtilty, God can, and will secure his people from being taken in it. (3.) That God would in justice turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and in mercy deliver him from being ruined by them, ver. 10. *Let the wicked fall into their own net*, the net which intentionally they procured for me; but which meritoriously they prepared for themselves, *Nec lex est justior illa, quam nunc artifices, arto perire sua*. All that are bound over to God's justice, are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes proves the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

P S A L M CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and afterwards penned it in this form. Here is, 1. The complaint he makes to God, ver. 1, 2. of the subtilty, strength, and malice of his enemies, ver. 3-6. and the coldness and indifference of his friends, ver. 4. 2. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, ver. 3. and was his refuge, ver. 5. 3. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, ver. 6, 7. 4. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in praises, ver. 7. Those that are troubled in

mind, body or estate, may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit) both vent their complaints, and fetch to his comforts.

MASCHIL OF DAVID; a prayer when he was in the cave.

1. I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked, have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of Hazezi, that David prayed this prayer, is not material: it is plain he was in a cave; it was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, to great a courtier, to be put to such mean shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so fully persuaded, and every moment in expectation of death: yet then he had such a preference of mind as to pray this prayer, and wherever he was, still he had his refuge about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and when he could not stretch forth his hands against his power, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it lead up our prayers, and our souls in prayer to God. He calls this prayer *Maschil*, a psalm of instruction, because of the good use he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others.

In these verses observe.

1. How David complained to God, ver. 1, 2. When the danger was over he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits cannot) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and even be a child to their parents when any thing frightens them. David poured out his complaint, which notes a free and full complaint; he was large and particular in it. His complaint was a full of its grievances as it could be, but he made a good use of it by pointing them out before the Lord; and this he did with a holy vanity. He cried unto the Lord with his voice, with the voice of his soul (so some think) for being hid in the cave, he durst not cry out with a worldly voice, lest that should have discovered him: but in secret prayer is a voice to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot or do not become words. Rom. viii. 26. Two things David laid open to God in this complaint.

(1.) His distress: he exhibited a picture of his condition, as if he were present before him in trouble, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prefer to God, nor present him his troubles as if God did not know it, without his shewing, but as one that put a case before him, and then keep up conversation with him, and was willing to refer himself to him, he unboasted himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to shew our troubles too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and putting upon it, would to us no kindness, whereas by shewing it to God we might cast the weight upon him, and then for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of a complaint to ourselves and others which we cannot with the decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

(2.) His desire. When he made his complaint, he made his supplication, ver. 1. Not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainers must be supplicants, for God will be sought unto.

2. What he complained of. In the way wherein I walked, suggesting no danger, have they privily laid a snare for me, to ensnare me. Saul gave Michal his daughter to David, on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 Sam. xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with design upon him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares he might have thanked himself: but when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

3. What comforts him in the midst of these calamities, ver. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, and ready to sink under the burden of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to despair, then thou knewest my path, i. e. then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me: or thou knewest my condition in all the particulars of it: when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly shew it, this comforted me that thou knewest it, Job xliii. 10. Thou knewest it, and thou wilt protect, preserve, and secure it, Psal. cxxi. 7. Deut. iii. 7.

4. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me, refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5. I cried unto thee, O LORD, I said thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. 6. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name; the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us for our instruction,

1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, ver. 4. When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an out-law, and it was dangerous for any body to harbour him, witness Ahimelech's fate, then no man would know him, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate, Psalm cix. 31. some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but refuge failed him, none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety; such swallow-friends, how many good men have been deceived by, that are gone when winter comes? David's life was exceeding precious, and yet when he was unjustly proscribed, no man cared for it, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ who in his sufferings for us was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was none to help, none to uphold, Isa. lxiii. 5.

2. How he then found satisfaction in God, ver. 5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them, but I cried unto thee, O Lord, who knowest me, and cared for me, when none else will

and wilt not fail me nor forsake me, when men do, for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave, *Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living*; I depend upon thee to be so, my refuge to save me from being miserable, my portion to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge. Lord, thy name is the strong tower that I run into. Thou art my refuge, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion, I never can think myself well provided for, till I know that *the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup*. Those that in sincerity take the Lord for their God, shall find him all-sufficient both as a refuge and a portion, so that as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest; Lord, *thou art my refuge and my portion*, every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. Thou art so in the land of the living, i. e. while I live, and have my being in this world, and in a better. There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time: we live in a world of dangers and wants; but what danger need we fear if God is our refuge, or what wants, if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called *the land of the living*, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

3. How in this satisfaction he addresseth himself to God, ver. 6, 7. Lord give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, for *I am brought very low*, and if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. Lord, deliver me from my persecutors; either tie their hands or turn their hearts, break their power or blast their project, restrain them or rescue me, for they are stronger than I, and it will be thine honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet myself a match for them. Lord, bring my soul out of prison, not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities. We may apply it spiritually, the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fretted through the weakness of faith and the prevalency of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty, and to enlarge their hearts, that they may run the way of his commandments.

4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. (1.) By his own thanksgiving, into which his present complaints would then be turned. Bring my soul out of prison, not that I may enjoy myself and my friend, and live at ease, no, nor that I may secure my country, but that I may praise thy name. This we should have an eye to in all our prayers to God for deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God, and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity for the excellent duty of praise. (1.) By the thanksgivings of many in his behalf, 2 Cor. i. 11. When I am enlarged, the righteous shall compass me about, for my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise. So the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Maschil) instructions from me; they shall compass me to join with me in my thanksgivings, because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me. Note, Others mercies ought to be the matter of our praises to God, and others praises to God, on our behalf ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

P S A L M CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much, and very often, not the same ever again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, (1.) He complains of his troubles through the oppression of his enemies, ver. 3. and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, ver. 4, 5. (2.) He prays, and prays earnestly, ver. 6. 1. That God would hear him, ver. 1—7. 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, ver. 2. 3. That he would not hide his face from him, ver. 7. but manifest his favour to him, ver. 8. 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty, ver. 8—10. and quicken him in it, ver. 11. 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, ver. 9—11. 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, ver. 12. We may the easier accommodate this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings which we all need at all times, mercy and grace.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. 2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate. 5. I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thy works: I muse on the works of thy hands. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, 1. David humbly begs to be heard, ver. 1. not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab. ii. 1. He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests might be granted, *hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications*; he is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his cause might be brought to a hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the judge of right and wrong. Or answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, i. e. according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

2. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, ver. 2. He seems here if not to correct, yet to explain his plea, ver. 1. Deliver me in thy righteousness: I mean, faith he, the righteous promises of the gospel not the righteous threatenings of the law: if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocency, I am quite undone; and therefore, (1.) His petition is, *enter not into judgment with thy ser-*

vant i. e. do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and approve ourselves to him, we must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly enquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them according to law; and that if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us, we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded, and then we are ruined for ever. But we must encourage ourselves with a hope, that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. (2.) His plea is, *in thy sight shall no man living be justified* upon those terms, for no man can plead innocency nor any righteousness of his own, either that he hath not sinned, or that he doth not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand, Job ix. 3.—xv. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

3. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him, ver. 3. Saul, that great enemy hath persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far, that he hath already smitten it down to the ground; though I am not yet underground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to dwell in darkness, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion fit to be appeared for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure fit to be appeared against?

4. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles, ver. 4. Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings, within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not so easily cut-run. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity; *Hozel, fir trees, if the cedars be shaken*.

5. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to make up against the oppression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, 1. He looks back, and remembers the days of old, ver. 5. God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, Psalm lxxvii. 5—11. 2. He looks round and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world: *I meditate on all thy works*: Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power and goodness in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by them, because they do not meditate upon them: they do not dwell on that copious curious subject, but soon quit, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarce touched upon it. I muse on, or as some read it, *I discourse of the operation of thy hands*, how great, how good it is. The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the force of man, Isa. li. 12, 13. 3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour, ver. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it, and bid it welcome: *My soul thirsteth after thee, it is to thee* (so the word is) entire for thee, intent on thee, it is as a thirsty land, which being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain: so do I need, so do I crave the support and refreshment of divine consolations under mine afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me. This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do they sink under their load, that will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7. Hear me speedily, O LORD, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down to the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. 11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness sake, bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; *Hear me speedily*, and defer no longer, for *my spirit faileth*. I am just ready to faint, reach the cordial quickly, quickly, or I am gone. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love, *Make haste O God to help me*.

Three things David here prays for,

1. The manifestations of God's favour towards him; that God would be well pleased with him and let him know that he was so, this he prefers before any good, Psalm iv. 6. 1. He dreads God's frowns: Lord, *hide not thy face from me*, Lord be not angry with me; do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with: Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour: If I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me. Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him. Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for then I am like them that go down to the pit; down to the grave; I am a dead man, weak and pale, and ghastly, thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit: even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, yet may sometimes, when the Almighty sets himself in array against them, look like those that are going

going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, *Job vi. 4. Psalm lxxviii. 6.* 2. He intreats God's favour, *ver. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning.* He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him; that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words, but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to *hear joy and gladness, Psalm li. 8.* God speaks to us by his word, and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to *hear his loving kindness, Psalm cvii. 43.* that we may set that always before us. *Cause me to hear it in the morning,* every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long. His plea is, *for on thee do I trust,* and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other. God's goodness useth to be wrought for those that trust in him, *Psalm xxxi. 8.* who by faith draw it out.

2. The operations of God's grace in him: 'Those he is as earnest for, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays, 1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works; for God deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this purpose. (1.) *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.* Sometimes those that are much in care to walk right, are in doubt and in the dark which is the right way: let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God by his word and Spirit and providence, to shew them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man doth not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking; but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, *I lift up my soul unto thee,* to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will. He did not only importunately but impartially desire to know his duty, and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) *Teach me to do thy will;* not only shew me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dextrously to my duty. It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, *Thou art my God,* and therefore my oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do. If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master doth his servant. (3.) *Lead me into the land of uprightness,* into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led and kept safe to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God shew us; nor go into that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us and carry us on it. The plea is, *Thy Spirit is good,* and able to make me good; good and willing to help those that are at a loss. *Let thy good Spirit lead me,* so some read it: They that have the Lord for their God, have his Spirit for their guide: and it is both their character and their privilege, that they are *led by the Spirit.*

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will, *ver. 11. Quicken me, O Lord;* quicken my graces that they may be alive, quicken my devotions that they may be lively, quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it, and this *for thy name's sake.* The best saints often find themselves dull and dead and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

3. The appearance of God's providence for him: 'That God would in his own way and time, give him rest from his troubles, *ver. 9. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies,* that they may not have their will against me; *for I fly unto thee to hide me,* I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it: preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding-place, that by faith make him so. He explains himself, *ver. 11. For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble:* for thy promise sake; nay, for thy mercy sake, (for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness) do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord let not my heart be troubled, *John xiv. 1, 2.* That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble, *ver. 12. Of thy mercy to me cut off mine enemies,* that I may be no longer in fear of them, and *destroy all them,* whoever they be, how numerous how powerful soever, that *afflict my soul,* and create vexation to that; *for I am thy servant,* and am resolved to continue so, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impudent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, that will not have him to reign over them, that grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

P S A L M CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble) the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, *2 Sam. v. 17.* In this psalm, 1. He acknowledgeth with triumph and thankfulness the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, *ver. 1—4.* 2. He prays to God to help him against the enemies that threatened him, *ver. 5—8.* and again, *ver. 11.* 3. He rejoiceth in the assurance of victory over them, *ver. 9, 10.* 4. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleaseth himself with the hopes of it, *ver. 12—15.* In singing this psalm we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; may pray for the prosperity of our souls, of our families, and of our land; and in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **B**LESSED be the LORD, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. 2. My goodness, and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust: who subdueth my people under me. 3. LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?

4. Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away. 5. Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. 7. Send thine hand from above, rid me, and deliver me out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children: 8. Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here, 1. David acknowledgeth his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, *ver. 1, 2.* A prayer for farther mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him.

He gives to God the glory of two things:

(1.) What he was to him: *Blessed be the Lord my rock, ver. 1. my goodness, my fortress, ver. 2.* He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us accordingly to depend upon him; all the saints that by faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer, but to outdo their expectations. David speaks it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy; and the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God, and his interest in him. 1. *He is my strength,* on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare; my rock to build on, to take shelter in. Even where we are weak, we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 2. *My goodness:* not only good to me, but my chief good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the author of all the good that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift. 3. *My fortress,* and my high tower, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong hold. David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds, at Engedi, *1 Sam. xxi. 29.* which perhaps were natural fastnesses. He had lately made himself master of the strong-hold of Zion, which was fortified by art, and he dwelt in the fort, *2 Sam. v. 7—9.* but he depends not on these: Lord, faith he, thou art my fortress, and my high tower: The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer far exceeding those either of nature or art. 4. *My deliverer,* and as it is in the original, very emphatically, *my deliverer to me;* not only a deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me, and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit. 5. *My shield,* to guard me against all the malignant darts that mine enemies let fly at me; not only my fortress at home, but my shield abroad in the field of battle. Wherever a believer goes, he carries his protection along with him: *Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield.*

(2.) What he had done for him. He was bred a shepherd, and seems not to have been designed by his parents or himself for any thing more: But, 1. God had made him a soldier; his hands had been used to the crook, and his fingers to the harp, but God taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to, he either finds them or makes them fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill: the same that teacheth the meanest husbandman his art, teacheth the greatest general his. It is pity any whose fingers God hath taught to fight should fight against him, or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness, who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of. 2. God has made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two. He subdueth my people under me. The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies: There was a special hand of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

2. He admires God's condescension to man, and to him in particular, *ver. 3, 4. Lord, what is man!* what a poor little thing is he, that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou makest account of him! that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race, as thou hast had to me! Considering the many disgraces which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David, and upon the Messiah, to whom those words are applied, *Heb. ii. 6.* who was therefore highly exalted, because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and therefore has authority to execute judgment, because he is the son of man. A question to this purpose David asked, *Psalm viii. 4.* and there he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in, *ver. 5. Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.* He illustrates it by the consideration of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him, *ver. 4. Man is like to vanity,* so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself: Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. His days have little substance in them; considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body: They are as a shadow, dark and sitting, transitory and finishing with the sun, and when that sets resolving itself into all shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable.

3. He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, *ver. 5, 6, 7, 8.* He doth not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but scatter them, destroy them: God knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterwards he describes them, *ver. 7, 8.* they are strange children, Philistines, aliens, ill neighbours to Israel, heathens that we are bound to be strange to and not to make any league with; and that therefore they carry it strangely towards us. Notwithstanding the advantages with which God has blessed David's arms against them, yet still they were vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in; one cannot take their word, for their mouth speaketh vanity; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: And against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but may depend on the God of truth and justice, that hateth falsehood, to defend us from them.

(1.) David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary for the conviction of those who preferred their dung-hill deities before the God of Israel, *ver. 5. Bow thy heavens, O Lord,* and make it evident that they are indeed thine; and that thou art the Lord of them.

and will not fail me nor forsake me, when men do, for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave, *Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living*; I depend upon thee to be so, *my refuge* to save me from being miserable, *my portion* to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge. Lord, *thy name* is the *strong tower* that I run into. Thou art *my refuge*, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion, I never can think myself well provided for, till I know that *the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup*. Those that in sincerity take the Lord for their God, shall find him all-sufficient both as a refuge and a portion, so that as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest; Lord, *thou art my refuge and my portion*, every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. Thou art so *in the land of the living*, i. e. while I live, and have my being in this world, and in a better. There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time: we live in a world of dangers and wants; but what danger need we fear if God is our refuge, or what wants, if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called *the land of the living*, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

3. How in this satisfaction he addresseth himself to God, ver. 6, 7. Lord give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, for *I am brought very low*, and if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. Lord, *deliver me from my persecutors*, either tie their hands or turn their hearts, break their power or blast their project, restrain them or rescue me, *for they are stronger than I*, and it will be thine honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet myself a match for them. Lord, *bring my soul out of prison*, not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perils. We may apply it spiritually, the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fretted through the weakness of faith and the prevalency of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty, and to enlarge their hearts, that they may *run the way of his commandments*.

4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. (1.) By his own thanksgiving, into which his present complaints would then be turned. *Bring my soul out of prison*, not that I may enjoy myself and my friend, and live at ease, no, nor that I may secure my country, but that *I may praise thy name*. This we should have an eye to in all our prayers to God for deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God, and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity for the excellent duty of praise. (1.) By the thanksgivings of many in his behalf, 2 Cor. i. 11. When I am enlarged, *the righteous shall compass me about*, for *my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise*. So the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Masehil) instructions from me; they shall compass me to join with me in my thanksgivings, *because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me*. Note, Others mercies ought to be the matter of our praises to God, and others praises to God, on our behalf ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

P S A L M CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much, and very often, not the same ever again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, (1.) He complains of his troubles through the oppression of his enemies, ver. 3. and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, ver. 4, 5. (2.) He prays, and prays earnestly, ver. 6. 1. That God would hear him, ver. 1—7. 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, ver. 2. 3. That he would not hide his face from him, ver. 7, but manifest his favour to him, ver. 8. 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty, ver. 8—10. and quicken him in it, ver. 11. 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, ver. 9—11. 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, ver. 12. We may the easier accommodate this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings which we all need at all times, mercy and grace.

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Here, 1. David humbly begs to be heard, ver. 1. not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab. ii. 1. He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests might be granted, *hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications*; he is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his cause might be brought to a hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the judge of right and wrong. Or answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, i. e. according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

2. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, ver. 2. He seems here if not to correct, yet to explain his plea, ver. 1. Deliver me *in thy righteousness*: I mean, faith he, the righteous promises of the gospel not the righteous threatenings of the law: if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocency, I am quite undone; and therefore, (1.) His petition is, *enter not into judgment with thy ser-*

vant i. e. do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and approve ourselves to him, we must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly enquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them according to law; and that if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us, we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded, and then we are ruined for ever. But we must encourage ourselves with a hope, that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and *we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged*. (2.) His plea is, *in thy sight shall no man living be justified* upon those terms, for no man can plead innocency nor any righteousness of his own, either that he hath not sinned, or that he doth not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, *we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3.—xv. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

3. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him, ver. 3. Saul, that great enemy hath persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far, that he hath already *smitten it down to the ground*; though I am not yet underground, I am *smitten* to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to *dwell in darkness*, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion fit to be appeared for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure fit to be appeared against?

4. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles, ver. 4. *Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me*, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings, within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not to easily out-run. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity; *Hosel, fir trees, if the cedars be shaken*.

5. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to murther up against the oppression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, 1. He looks back, and remembers the days of old, ver. 5. God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, Psalm lxxvii. 5—11. 2. He looks round and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world: *I meditate on all thy works*: Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power and goodness in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by them, because they do not meditate upon them: they do not dwell on that copious curious subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarce touched upon it. *I muse on*, or as some read it, *I discourse of the operation of thy hands*, how great, how good it is. The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the force of man, Isa. lv. 12, 13. 3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour, ver. 6. *I stretch forth my hands unto thee* as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it, and bid it welcome: *My soul thirsteth after thee, it is to thee* (so the word is) *entire for thee, intent on thee, it is as a thirsty land*, which being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain: so do I need, so do I crave the support and refreshment of divine consolations under mine afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me. This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do they sink under their load, that will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7. Hear me speedily, O LORD, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down to the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. 11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness sake, bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; *Hear me speedily*, and defer no longer, *for my spirit faileth*. I am just ready to faint, reach the cardinal quickly, quickly, or I am gone. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love, *Make haste O God to help me*.

Three things David here prays for,

1. The manifestations of God's favour towards him; that God would be well pleased with him and let him know that he was so, this he prefers before any good, Psalm iv. 6. 1. He dreads God's frowns: Lord, *hide not thy face from me*, Lord be not angry with me; do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with: Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour: If I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me. Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him. Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for then I am *like them that go down to the pit*; down to the grave; I am a dead man, weak and pale, and ghastly, thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit: even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, yet may sometimes, when the Almighty sets himself in array against them, look like those that are going

going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, *Job vi. 4. Peris lxxviii. 6.* 2. He intreats God's favour, *ver. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning.* He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him; that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words, but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to *hear joy and gladness, Psalm li. 8.* God speaks to us by his word, and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to *hear his loving kindness, Psalm cvii. 43.* that we may set that always before us. *Cause me to hear it in the morning,* every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long. His plea is, *for on thee do I trust,* and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other. God's goodness is left to be wrought for those that trust in him, *Psalm xxi. 8.* who by faith draw it out.

2. The operations of God's grace in him : Those he is as earnest for, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays, 1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works; for God deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this purpose. (1.) *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.* Sometimes there is it are much in care to walk right, are in doubt and in the dark which is the right way : Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God by his word and Spirit and providence, to shew them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man doth not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking; but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, *I lift up my soul unto thee*, to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will. He did not only importunately desire to know his duty, and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) *Teach me to do thy will:* not only shew me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, by turning my hand dextrously to my duty. It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, *Thou art my God*, and therefore my master, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do. If we do not sincerely take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master doth his servant. (3.) *Lead me into the land of uprightness,* into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or into a settled course of holiness, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We desire to be led and kept safe to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God shew us; nor go into that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak or lame, or timorous, or distressed; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us and carry us on it. The plea is, *Thy Spirit is good*, and able to make me good; good and willing to help those that are at a loss. *Let thy good Spirit lead me*, so some read it. They that have the Lord for their God, have his Spirit for their guide; and it is both their character and their privilege, that they are *led by the Spirit*.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will, *ver.* 11. **Quicken me, O Lord;** quicken my graces that they may be active, quicken my devotions that they may be lively, quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it, and this *for thy name's sake.* The best faints often find themselves dull and dead and flow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

3. The appearance of God's providence for him: That God would in his own way and time, give him rest from his troubles, *ver. 9. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies*, that they may not have their will against me; *for I fly unto thee to hide me*, I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it: preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding-place, that by faith make him so. He explains himself, *ver. 11. For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble*: for thy promise sake; yea, for thy mercy sake. (for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness) do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord let not my heart be troubled, *John xiv. 1, 2.* That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble, *ver. 12. Of thy mercy to me cut off mine enemies*, that I may be no longer in fear of them, and *destroy all them*, whoever they be, how numerous how powerful soever, *that afflict my soul*, and create vexation to that; *for I am thy servant*, and am resolved to continue so, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impatient enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, that will not have him to reign over them, that grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

PSALM CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble) the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 17. In this psalm, 1. He acknowledgeth with triumph and thankfulness the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, ver. 1—4. 2. He prays to God to help him against the enemies that threatened him, ver. 5—8. and again, ver. 11. 3. He rejoiceth in the assurance of victory over them, ver. 9, 10. 4. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleaseth himself with the hopes of it, ver. 12—15. In singing this psalm we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; may pray for the prosperity of our souls, of our families, and of our land; and in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **B**LESSED be the LORD, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight.
2. My goodness, and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust: who subdueth my people under me. 3. LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?

4. Man is like to vanity: his way are as a flint, which passeth away. 5. Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6. Cast forth lightning, and consume them: shoot out thine arrow, and destroy them. 7. Send thine hand from above, and smite, and deliver me out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children. 8. Whole mouth speaketh vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here, 1. David acknowledgeth his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, ver. 1, 2. A prayer for further mercy is now begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should fix our ourselves to thank him.

He gives to God the glory of two things :

[illegible]

12. What he did not learn. He was great a general, and does not to have been degraded by the grosser and baser part of the army. But, 1. God had made him a general, as he made him a soldier, a crook, and his fingers were sharp, but God *kept the law of his hand, and his fingers to fight*, because the definition of a general is the ability of what God calls men to, he either finds them a kingdom to rule, or men of war give God the glory of all their military abilities, and find that teacheth the meanest husbandman his art, therefore the general has. It is pity any whole fingers God hath taught to fight the soldier against him, or his kingdom among men. Those that are general should have knowledge God with thankfulness, who prove to be general for a while, which they themselves never thought of. 2. God was militant, a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two. *He subdeth my people under me.* The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their princes, and to preserving the order and benefit of societies: There was a great hand of God in making the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of Jews into subjection to the Lord Jesus, as manifest to all, when in the day of his power.

2. He admires God's exalted nature to man, and to him, in particular, *ver. 3, 4.* *Lord, what is man! what a poor little thing is he, that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou makest account of him!* and he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, that thou hast in him tender regard to any of that mean and worthless nature, that thou hast said to me! Considering the many disgraces which the human nature has undergone, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon David, in general, the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David, and more so, Messiah, to whom those words are applied. *How is he exalted, and how is he highly exalted, because he has died much more than all of us have, and therefore has authority to exhort, to give us counsel, to tell us how to live.* A question to this purpose David did not ask, and which contradicted the wonder by the confession, *ver. 4.* *How is he exalted, who has placed man in, ver. 5. Thou hast exalted him as high as angels, above them.* He illustrates it by the consideration of his mean and mortal nature, notwithstanding thou hast put up him, *ver. 4.* *Man is like a vanity, so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compelled about with many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself: Nay, he is vanity, he is so by his best estate. His days have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body: They are as a shadow, dark and hollow, transitory and vanishing with the sun, and when that sets, folding itself into ad shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no less of it.* David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and depicable.

3. He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, *ver. 5, 6, 7, 8.* He doth not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but *frighten them, destroy them*: God know whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterwards he describes them, *ver. 7, 8.* they are *strange children*, Philistines, aliens, all neighbours to Israel, heathens that were bound to be strange to and not to make any league with; and that therefore they carry it strangely towards us. Notwithstanding the advantages with which God has blessed David's arms against them, yet still they were vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in; one cannot take their word, for their *mouth speaketh vanity*; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; *for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood*: And against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but may depend on the God of truth and justice, that hateth falsehood, to defend us from them.

(1. David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary for the conviction of those who preferred their dung-hill deities before the God of Israel, ver. 5. *Bow thy heavens, O Lord*, and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of these

them, *Ipsa* lxiiv. 1. Let thy providence threaten mine enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth when they are thick and hang very low, big with a storm. Fight against those that fight against us, so that it may visibly appear thou art for us. *Touch the mountains*, our strong and stately enemies, and let them *smoke*. Shew thyself by the ministry of thy angel, as thou didst upon mount Sinai.

(2.) That he would appear against his enemies; that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows, his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof; so penetrating is the force of lightning. That he himself would shoot these arrows, who we are sure never misseth his mark, but hits where he aims.

(3.) That he would appear for him, *ver.* 7. He begs for their destruction in order to his own deliverance, and the repose of his people: *Send thy hand, thy power from above*, for that way we look for help, *rid me, and deliver me out of these great waters* that are ready to overflow me. God's time to help his people is when they are sinking, and all other helps fail.

9. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God; upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. 10. *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. 11. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children: whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. 12. That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth: that our daughters *may be* as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: 13. That our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our streets: 14. That our oxen *may be* strong to labour: that there be no breaking in, nor going out: that there be no complaining in our streets. 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case: *yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm as in the former; he first gives glory to God, and then begs mercy from him.

1. He praises God for the experience he had had of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect farther mercy from him, *ver.* 9, 10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God; *I will sing a new song unto thee, O God*; a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 *Chron.* xx. 21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God: he will praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings; in the best manner, thinking all little enough to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be, *ver.* 10. *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings. This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them, *Psal.* xxxiii. 16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their protector. How much service do they owe him then with their power, who gives them all their salvation? 2. That good kings who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He hath engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects, and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for David his servant, whom he had many a time delivered from the hurtful sword, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New Testament song: God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a conqueror over all the powers of darkness, *Ipsa* xlii. 1.—xlii. 8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a horn of salvation.

2. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

(1.) That he might be delivered from the public enemies, *ver.* 11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, *ver.* 7, 8. His persecutors were full of the same character, false and perfidious, and that will certainly over-reach an honest man, and be too hard for him: therefore, Lord, do thou deliver me from them, for they are a strange sort of people.

(2.) That he might see the public peace and prosperity; Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief. David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people: wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

1. The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people.

(1.) A hopeful progeny, *ver.* 12. That our sons and our daughters may be in all respects such as we could wish. He means not only those of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children promising and likely to do well. 1. It is pleasant to see our sons as plants grow up in their youth, as olive-plants, *Psal.* cxxviii. 3. the planting of the Lord, *Ipsa* lxi. 3. to see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted; to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day: To see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. 2. It is no less desirable to see our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace or temple. By daughters families are united and connected to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones: and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building: when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing godliness; when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

(2.) Great plenty: Numerous families increase that care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. 1. That their store-houses might be well replenished with the fruits and products of the earth; That our garners may be full, like those of the good householder, who brings out of them things new and old; those things that are best new, he has them so; that are best when they are kept, he has them so. That we may have in them all manner of stores, for ourselves and our friends. That living plentifully we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully: that having abundance we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise what profit is it to have our garners full? James v. 3. 2. That their flocks might greatly increase: That our sheep might bring forth thousands, and ten thousands in our folds. Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks, *Prov.* xxvii. 26. and of ours too, else wool would not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. 3. That their beasts designed for service might be fit for it: That our oxen may be strong to labour in the plough; that they may be fat and fleshy, so some; in good laborious case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy and take our pleasure, but that we may be strong to labour, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong, it is for labour.

(3.) An uninterrupted peace. 1. That there be no war: no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters. Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. 2. That there be no oppression or faction, no complaining in our streets; That the people may have no cause to complain, either of their government or of one another; nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

2. His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation, which he so much desired, *ver.* 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case; but it is seldom so, and never long so; *yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.* The relation of a people to God as theirs is here spoken of, either, 1. As that which is the fountain of all those blessings from whence they flow. Happy is Israel, if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be in such a case. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, 2. As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, *Happy is the people that is in such a case*; they are blessed that prosper in the world; but he immediately corrects himself, *yea, rather, Happy is that people whose God is the Lord*, that have his favour and love and grace, according to the tenor of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this and much more cannot make us happy, unless the Lord be our God: so the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this cannot make us miserable, if he be.

P S A L M CXLV.

The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this and the five that follow it to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though this only is entitled David's psalm, yet we have no reason to think but that they were all his as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer, follow six psalms of praise: for those that are much in prayer shall not want matter for praise; and those that have spent in prayer must abound in praise. Our thanksgivings for mercy when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it when we were in pursuit of it. David in the last of his begging psalms had promised to praise God, *Psal.* cxliv. 9. and here he performs his promise. 2. That the book of psalms concludes with psalms of praise, all praise, for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is that in which all the psalms centre. And it intimates, that God's people towards the end of their life should abound much in praise, and the rather, because at the end of their life they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise; and the nearer they come to heaven, the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of those psalms which are composed alphabetically, a *Psal.* xxv. and xxxiv. &c. that it might be the easier committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude in this bright constellation; and some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, That whosoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day, shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, 1. David engageth himself and others to praise God, *ver.* 1, 2—4—7, 13—20. 2. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise; God's greatness, *ver.* 3. His goodness, *ver.* 3, 9. The proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom, *ver.* 13. The kingdom of providence, *ver.* 14, 15, 16. The kingdom of grace, *ver.* 17—20. And then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God, *ver.* 21. with which resolution our hearts must be filled and fixed in singing this psalm.

DAVID'S PSALM OF PRAISE.

1. I WILL extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: and his greatness is unsearchable. 4. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts and I will declare thy greatness. 7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy. 9. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The entitling of this David's psalm of praise, may intimate, not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it, and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In this former

mer part of this psalm God's glorious attributes are praised, as in the latter part of the psalm his kingdom and the administration of it.

Observe, 1. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

(1.) Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engageth himself, and hath his heart much enlarged in it. What he doth that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it; it was his duty, it was his delight. Observe, 1. How he expresseth the work itself; *I will extol thee, and bless thy name*, ver. 1. *i. e.* I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee, and endeavour to raise the like in others. When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again, ver. 2. *I will bless thee, I will praise thy name*; the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein. Again, ver. 5. *I will speak of thine honour*; and ver. 6. *I will declare thy greatness*; He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak with reverence to his praise upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? 2. How he expresseth his resolution to persevere in it. (1.) He will be constant to this work: *Every day will I bless thee*. Praising God must be our daily work; No day must pass, though never so busy a day, though never so sorrowful a day, without praising God: we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us, there is therefore reason we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. (2.) He will continue in it: *I will bless thee for ever and ever*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. This intimates, 1. That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout his *ever* in this world. 2. That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. 3. That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world: They that make it their constant work on earth, shall have it their everlasting blessing in heaven.

(2.) He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. 1. They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it: when *I declare thy greatness, men shall speak of it*, ver. 6. *they shall abundantly utter it*, ver. 7. or *pour it out*, as the word is; they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so. 2. They shall keep it up when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession, ver. 4. *One generation shall praise thy works to another*. The generation that is going off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell them what they have seen in their days, and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts, Psalm lxxviii. 3. and the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off; so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship; for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in, in which there is no succession of generations.

2. What we must give to God the glory of.

(1.) Of his greatness, and his great works. We must declare, that *great is the Lord*, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty incontestible; and therefore there is no dispute but *great is the Lord*, and, if great, then *greatly to be praised*, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginable. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unsearchable; who can conceive or express how great God is? But then he is so much the more to be praised; when we cannot by searching find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. God is great, for, 1. His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he hath set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness, we must not fail to *speak of the glorious honour of his majesty*, the splendor of the glory of his majesty, ver. 5. How bright he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it? 2. His works are wondrous in this lower world; the preservation, maintenance, and government of all the creatures, speaks the Creator very great: When therefore we declare his greatness, we must observe the unquestionable proofs of it, and must declare his mighty acts, ver. 4. *speak of his wondrous works*, ver. 5. *the might of his terrible acts*, ver. 6. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supremedirector; it is he that performeth all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of his justice; they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, and observe the finger of God, his hand, his arm in all, that we may marvel.

(2.) Of his goodness; this is his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 19. it is what he glories in, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. and it is what we must give him the glory of. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness*, ver. 7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted; nay, they can never be lessened, for he will be as rich in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable goodness, it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind, and preserve the memorials of; for it is *worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance*: and the memory we have, the remembrance we retain of God's goodness, we should utter, we should abundantly utter, as those that are full of it, that are very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget at the same time to *sing of his righteousness*: for as he is gracious in rewarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God, as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together, Rom. xi. 22.

1. There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature, ver. 8. *The Lord is gracious* to those that serve him, he is full of compassion to those that need him, *slow to anger* to those that have offended him, and of great mercy to all that seek him, and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to forgive, more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

2. There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, ver. 9. As he is good, so he doth good; he is good to all, to all his creatures; from the highest angels to the meanest worm; to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works, i. e. 1. All his works, all his creatures receive the fruits of his merciful care, and bounty; it is extended to them all, he hateth nothing that he has made. 2. The works of his mercy outshone all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the glory of God be forever so illustrious, as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the divine goodness will the everlasting hal- lelujahs of all the saints be sung.

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10. All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power. 12. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. 14. The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. 15. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17. The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18. The LORD is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. 21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of him who is the greatest and best of beings (*optimus & maximus*) were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here in these verses we are taught to give him the glory of his kingdom, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clear, so very bright. Observe, as before,

1. From whom the tribute of praise is expected, ver. 13. *All God's works shall praise him*; they all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour, he will get him honour upon: but his saints do bless him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him which other creatures have not, but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They bless him, for they collect the rent and tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praises the builder, or the well drawn picture praises the painter: But his saints bless him as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

2. For what this praise is to be given; *They shall speak of thy kingdom*. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of, and often spoke of. As before he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so here he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

(1.) The greatness of his kingdom; it is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his controul. To show the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, 1. The pomp of it: Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and believing we should speak of the glory of his kingdom, ver. 11. *the glorious majesty of it*, ver. 12. for he hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. 2. The power of it. When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom, they must talk of his power, the extent of it, the efficacy of it; his power, by which he can do any thing, and doth every thing he pleaseth, ver. 11. and as a proof of it let them make known his mighty acts, ver. 12. that the sons of men may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects, and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty potentate. 3. The perpetuity of it, ver. 13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchies come to an end; but, Lord, *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*. God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now intrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all to eternity. His dominion endureth throughout all generations, for he himself is eternal, and his counsels unchangeable and uniform: and Satan, who hath set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in a chain.

(2.) The goodness of his kingdom. His royal title and title is, *The Lord God gracious and merciful*; and his government answers his title. The goodness of God appears in what he doth.

1. For all the creatures in general, ver. 15, 16. He provides food for all flesh, and therein appears his everlasting mercy, Psalm cxxxvi. 25. All the creatures live upon God, and as they had their being from him at first, so from him they have all the supports of their being, and on him they depend for the continuance of it. (1.) The eye of their expectation attends upon him: *The eyes of all wait on thee*. The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to wait upon God, because they seek their food according to their instinct which the God of nature hath put into them; and they *for not, neither do they reap*, Matt. vi. 26. and because they take what the God of nature hath provided for them, in the time and way that he hath appointed, and are content with it. (2.) The hand of his bounty is stretched out unto them. *Thou givest them their meat in due season*: the meat proper for them, and in their proper time, when they need it: so that none of the creatures ordinarily perish for want of food, no not in the winter. *Thou openest thy hand freely and liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing*; except some of the unreasonable children of men, that will be satisfied with nothing, but are still complaining, still crying, Give, give.

2. For the children of men in particular, whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

(1.) He doth none of them any wrong, for, ver. 17. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways*, and not unrighteous in any of them; he is holy, and acts like himself with a perfect rectitude in all his works. In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none, but administering justice to all: *The ways of the Lord are equal*, though ours are unequal. In giving laws, in deciding controversies, in recompensing services, and punishing offences, he is incontestibly just, and we are bound to own it.

(2.) He doth all of them good, his own people in a special manner. 1. He supports those that are sinking, and it is his honour to help the weak, ver. 14. *He upholdeth all that fall*, in that though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave, and yet providence wonderfully upholds them, raiseth them up, and faith, *Return*, Psalm xc. 3. If all had died that were dying, the world would have been

very thin. Many of the children of God that have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts, so that *though they fell, they were not utterly cast down*, Psalm xxxvii. 24. If those that are *boised down* by oppression and affliction be *raised up*, it was God that raised them: And all those that are *heavy laden* under the burden of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them. 2. He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, ver. 18, 19. In this appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petitioning, but all the encouragement that can be to petition. (1.) The grant is very rich, that God will be *nigh to all that call upon him*; he will be always within call of their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If a *neighbour that is near is better than a brother afar off*, Psalm xxvii. 10. much more a God that is near. Nay, he will not only be *nigh to them*, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but *he will fulfil their desires*; they shall have what they ask, and find what they seek. It was said, ver. 16. that he *satisfies the desires of every living thing*; much more will he fulfil the desire of them that fear him: for he that feeds his birds will not starve his babes. *He will hear their call and will save them*; that his hearing them to purpose as he heard David, i. e. saved him from the horn of the unicorn, Psalm xxii. 21. (2.) The proviso is very reasonable: he will hear and help us, 1. If we fear him, if we worship and serve him with a holy awe of him; for otherwise, how can we expect that he should accept us? 2. If we call upon him in truth; for he desires that in the inward part: we must be faithful to God and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions, inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth. He takes them under his special protection that have a confidence and complacency in him, ver. 20. *The Lord preserveth them all that love him*; they lie exposed in this world, but he by preserving them in their integrity will effectually secure them, that no real evil shall befall them.

3. If any are destroyed they may thank themselves: *All the wicked he will destroy*, but they have by their wickedness fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, that *with those eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked*, Psalm xci. 8. and God will by this means preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief.

Lastly, the psalmist concludes, 1. With a resolution to give glory to God himself, ver. 21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord*. When we have said what we can in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did, ver. 1. but conclude them with it, as he doth here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of our thanksgiving be: While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises. 2. With a call to others to do so too, *Let all flesh, all mankind, bless his holy name for ever and ever*. Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever, it is pity but they should be all so.

P S A L M CXLVI.

This and all the rest of the psalms that follow begin and end with Hallelujah, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name Jah, the contraction of Jehovah. In this excellent psalm of praise, 1. The psalmist engages himself to praise God, ver. 1, 2. 2. He engageth others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him; And, (1. He shows) why we should not trust in them, ver. 3, 4. (2.) Why we should trust in God, ver. 5. Because of his power in the kingdom of nature, ver. 6. His dominion in the kingdom of providence, ver. 7. And his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 8, 9, that everlasting kingdom, ver. 10. to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye in the singing of it.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2. While I live, will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being. 3. Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. 4. His breath goeth forth, he returned to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince, and as such it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to *dance before the ark*; but he was so far from being of this mind, that he will himself be first and foremost in the work, ver. 1, 2. 2. He thinks his dignity is so far from excusing him from it, that it rather obliged him to lead in it; and that it was so far from lessening him, that it really magnified him; therefore he stirs up himself to it, and to make a business of it, *Praise the Lord, O my soul*; and resolves to abide by it; I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as the Lord, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God in covenant with me. Then praise is most pleasant, when in praising God we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to. This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it while I have any being, for when I have no being on earth, I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better. That which is the great end of our being, ought to be our great enjoyment and employment; while we have any being, in thee must our time and powers be spent.

2. It might be thought that he himself having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes; that they should all come and *trust in his shadow*, and make him their *stay and strong hold*. No, saith David, *Put not your trust in princes*, ver. 3. not in me, nor in any other: do not repose your confidence in them, do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some thought they knew the better how to reign by knowing how to dissimble; be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity, it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words. But though we suppose them very wise and good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, there is salvation, and who will not fail those that

trust in him. But all sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who being in honour did not abide.

(1.) We cannot be sure of their ability, even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect. David himself owned, 2 Sam. iii. 39. *I am this day weak, though anointed king*. So that in the son of man, oftentimes, there is no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wit's end, as a man astonished, and then though a mighty man, he cannot save, Jer. xiv. 9.

(2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives; yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from them, ver. 4. *His breath goeth forth*, so it doth every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then he returneth to his earth: It is his in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence; Gen. iii. 19. It is his if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he hath chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he hath set his affections: He shall go to his own place. Or rather, it is his earth, because of the property he has in it, and though he has had large possessions on earth, a grave is all that will remain to him. *The earth God has given to the children of men*, and great strivings there is about it, and as a mark of their authority, men call their lands by their own names. But after a while there is no part of the earth will be their own, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remaineth. But when he returneth to his earth in that very day shall his thoughts perish: all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us, vanish and are gone: and he cannot take one step farther in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, Job xvii. 11. And then what comes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal as much as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that potentate which hath immortality. *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*, and will not be there long.

5. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: 6. Which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: 7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed, which giveth food to the hungry: the LORD looseth the prisoners. 8. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous. 9. The LORD preserveth the strangers: he releiveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations, Praise ye the LORD,

The psalmist having cautioned us not to trust in princes, because if we do we shall be miserably disappointed, here encourageth us to put our confidence in God, because if we do so we shall be happily secured. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help*, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him; and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Those shall have God for their help, 1. That take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. That have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him; that have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, 1. in the providence of God for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is. 2. In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm, to have a most visible remarkable aspect upon the eternal Son of God, in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbins, who saith of ver. 10. that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it doth so he thinks will appear by comparing, ver. 7, 8. with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah, Matt. xi. 5, 6. *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk*; and the closing words there, *Blessed is he whosever shall not be offended in me*, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to ver. 5. *Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God*, and who is not offended in him.

Let us take a view of the mighty encouragements here given us to hope in the Lord our God.

1. He is the maker of the world, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which being derived from him, depend upon him, ver. 6. *He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is*, and therefore his arm is not shortened that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and without whom was not any thing made that was made. It is a great support to faith, that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth for ever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true from the beginning, and therefore true to the end. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, the faithful witness, as well as the beginning, the author and principle of the creation of God, Rev. iii. 14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for all the promises are in him yea and Amen.

3. He is the pattern of injured innocence. He pleadeth the cause of the oppressed and (we read it) he executeth judgment for them. He often doth it in his providence, righting those that suffer wrong, and clearing up their integrity; he will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, Jude 15.

4. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous. He giveth food to the hungry; so God doth in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once, when he fed thousands miraculously, with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family: this encourageth to hope in him as nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound: *The Lord looseth the prisoners*. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and

and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought in making the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear, with that one word, *Ephrata, be opened*; his cleansing of lepers, and so discharging them from their confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of *loosing the prisoners*; and we may take encouragement in those to hope in him, for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, *Ihu. lxi. 1, 2.*

6. He giveth sight to those that have been long deprived of it. *The Lord shall open the eyes of the blind*, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of, *Gen. xxi. 19.* and the prophet's servant, *2 Kings vi. 17.* But this has special reference to Christ, for *since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*, till Christ did it, *John ix. 32.* and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

7. He sets that straight that was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink; he *raiseth them that are bowed down*, by comforting and supporting them under their burdens, and in due time removing their burdens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight that had been *bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself*, *Luke xiii. 12.* and he still doth it by his grace, giving rest to them that were weary and heavy laden, and rising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people: *the Lord loveth the righteous*, and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus shewed his love to the righteous, *by fulfilling all righteousness.*

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care: *The Lord preserveth the strangers.* It ought not to pass without remark, that the name Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power, that of Jehovah, that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed; and that is as much to the glory of God to succour them that are in misery, as it is to ride on the heavens of his name Jah, *Pfalm lxxviii. 4.* (1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but *the Lord preserveth them*, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection, and been kept alive by it. (2.) *Widows and fatherless children*, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them right, nay, that will do them wrong, but *the Lord releaseth them* and raiseth up friends for them. See *Exod. xxii. 22, 23.* Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, *may find mercy*, *Hos. xiv. g.*

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom, and oppress the faithful subjects of it; *The way of the wicked he turneth upside down*, and therefore let us hope in him, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah, that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, *ver. 10.* Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times, that *the Lord shall reign for ever* in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, *even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.* Christ is set king on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader, it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch, or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand forever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that *the Lord reigns* as Zion's God, as Zion's King; that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

P S A L M CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise: some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity; but it is so much of a piece with Psalm cxlv. that I rather think it was penned by David, and what is said, *ver. 2-13.* may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that had been out-casts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divide it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. 1. *We are called upon to praise God*, *ver. 1-7-12.* 2. *We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified*, (1.) *As the God of nature, and so he is very great*, *ver. 4, 5-8, 9-15-18.* (2.) *As the God of grace comforting his people*, *ver. 3-6-10, 11.* (3.) *As the God of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion, settling their civil state*, *ver. 2-13, 14.* and especially settling religion among them, *ver. 19, 20.* It is easy in singing this psalm to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do it with suitable affections.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. 2. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the out-casts of Israel. 3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4. He telleth the number of the stars: he calleth them all by their names. 5. Great is our LORD and of great power: his understanding is infinite. 6. The LORD lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving: sing praise upon the harp unto our God: 8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. 10. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and those that hope in his mercy.

Here, 1. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason, that we are thus called to it again and again; *praise ye the Lord*, *ver. 1.* and again, *ver. 7.* Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp unto our God, let all our praises be directed to him and centre in him: for it is good to do it; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us: It is acceptable to our Creator,

and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just and good, the practice of it will turn to good account. It is good, for, (1.) It is pleasant; holy joy and delight is required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages, it is heaven upon earth, it is what we should be in, as in our element. (2.) It is comely, it is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God, we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

2. God is recommended to us as the proper object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

(1.) The care he takes of his chosen people, *ver. 2.* Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, *The Lord builds up Jerusalem.* The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building, he framed the model of it in his own counsels, he founded it by the preaching of his gospel, he adds to it daily, such as shall be saved, and so increaseth it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people out-casts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance, and bringing them again into the communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, are gathered together again.

(2.) The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, *ver. 3.* They are broken in heart, and wounded, humbled and troubled for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God, and the injury they have done to themselves by sin. Those God heals with the consolations of his Spirit, he speaks peace to them, assures them that their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into the bleeding wounds, and then binds them up and makes them to rejoice. They that have had experience of this, need not be called upon to praise the Lord, for when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song in their mouths, *Pfalm xl. 2, 3.* And for this let others praise him also.

(3.) The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, *ver. 4, 5.* The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarce discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands and the instruments of his providence; their bulk and power is very great, but he calleth them all by their names, which speaks his dominion over them, and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleaseth. They are his servants, his soldiers, he musters them, he marshals them, they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction. He mentions this as one instance of many, to shew that great is our Lord, and of great power, he can do what he pleaseth, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained and you have his utmost length, hitherto his wisdom can reach and no farther; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

(4.) The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud and exalting them of low degree, *ver. 6.* The Lord lifteth up the meek that abase themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but the wicked, that carry it insolently towards God and scornfully towards all mankind, that lift themselves in pride and folly, he casteth them down to the ground, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, however, in the day when their faces shall be filled with everlasting shame. God proves himself to be God, by looking on the proud and abusing them, *Joh xl. 12.*

(5.) The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, *ver. 8, 9.* Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. (1.) He covereth the heaven with clouds which darken the air, and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he prepareth that rain for the earth, which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions for the present look black and dark and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes when the sky is overcast it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, *Heb. xii. 11.* which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which direct us on earth to depend on God in heaven. All the rain with which the earth is watered, is of God's preparing. (2.) By the rain which distils on the earth, he makes grass to grow upon the mountains, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of, nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains that are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the valleys are, yet are watered, for as that they are not barren. (3.) This grass he gives to the beast for his food, the beasts of the mountains that run wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the young ravens, that being forsaken by their old ones, cry; that cry he hears, and finds out ways to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

(6.) The complacency he takes in his people, *ver. 10, 11.* In times when great things are a doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceedeth from the Lord) who they are, and what that is which God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that God is pleased to own. (1.) Not in the strength of armies: not in the cavalry, for he delighted not in the strength of a horse, the war-horse, noted for his courage, *Job xxxix. 19, &c.* nor in the infantry, for he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man; he doth not mean the swiftness of them for flight to quit the field, but the steadiness of them, for charging, to stand the ground. If one king making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order, it is pity they should suffer any disgrace; for that is no argument with God, *Pfalm xx. 7.* Jehoshaphat's was much better, *Lord, we have no might*, *1 Chron. xx. 12.* But (2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace; a serious and suitable regard to God, is that which is in the sight of God of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts of, and takes pleasure in those that fear him, and that hope in his mercy. Observe, 1. A holy fear of God and hope in God, not only may concur, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time there must be both a reverence of his majesty, and a complacency in his goodness: both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but must act under the gracious influence of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair: thus must we take our work before us. 2. We must hope in God's mercy, his general mercy, even then when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. An humble

humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature, is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute of his which he most glorifies in. Even a man of honour loves to be trusted.

12. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Zion. 13. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates: he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14. He makes peace in thy borders: and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. 16. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. 17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? 18. He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19. He sheweth his word unto Jacob: his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Jerusalem and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, ver. 12. For where should praise be offered up to God, but there where his altar is? Where may he expect that glory should be given to him, but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites that attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. *Praise thy God, O Zion*: he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise.

Jerusalem and Zion must praise God.

1. For the prosperity and flourishing estate of their civil interests, ver. 13, 14. (1.) For the common safety; they had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them, if God had not *strengthened the bars of their gates* and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation, will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must therefore in the careful and diligent use of those means depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land, more to the wall of fire, than to the wall of water round about us, *Zech. ii. 5.* (2.) For the increase of their people: this strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing: *He hath blessed thy children within thee*, with that first and great blessing, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land*. It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord, *Isa. lxi. 9.* and a comfort to the generation that is going off to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful; for which blessing God must be blessed. (3.) For the public tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war: *He maketh peace in thy borders*, by putting an end to the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, *i. e.* in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there be no intestine broils and animosities; and *upon thy borders*; that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble anywhere, it is in the borders, the marches of a country, the frontier towns lie most exposed, so that if there be peace in the borders, there is an universal peace, a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. (4.) For great plenty, the common effect of peace: *He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat*; wheat the most valuable of grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fulness thereof; What would they more! Canaan abounded with the best wheat, *Deut. xxxii. 14.* and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, *Ezek. xxvii. 17.* The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones or spices, but with *the finest of the wheat*, with bread that strengthens man's heart, and that made it the glory of all lands; and for that God was praised in Zion.

2. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter weather; he that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of power, from whom all the powers of nature are derived, and on whom they depend, and who produceth all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

(1.) In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes) they are produced by the will and power and providence of God, ver. 15. *He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth*, as one that has an incontestible authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders and put them in execution: As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed by a word of mighty power, *God speaks and it is done*, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely but speedily, *his word runneth very swiftly*; for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning which passeth through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, *Luke xvii. 24.* Angels that carry his word shall fulfil it, *thy swiftly*, *Dan. ix. 21.*

(2.) In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

1. Frosts are from God; with him are the *treasures of the snow*, and the *hail*, *Job xxxviii. 22, 23.* and out of these treasures he draws as he pleaseth. 1. *He giveth snow like wool*; it is compared to wool for its whiteness, *Isa. i. 18.* and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness; see how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. (2.) *He scattereth the hoar frost*; which is dew congealed, as the snow, and hail is rain congealed; this looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth, and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, *Psal. lxxviii. 47.* (3.) *He casteth forth his ice like morsels*, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of drink, is now as morsels of meat or crusts of bread; And, (4.) When we see the frost and snow and ice, we feel it in the air, *Who can stand before his cold?* The beasts cannot, they retire into dens, *Job xxxvii. 8.* they are easily conquered then, *2 Sam. xxiii. 20.* Men cannot, but are forced to take shelter of fires or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it his cold, it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses and clothes and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season: and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness; which appears in

the winter-weather, which shall not cease no more than summer, *Gen. viii. 22.* And let us also infer from it, if we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

2. Thaws are from God; when he pleaseth, ver. 18. *He sendeth out his word and melteth them*; the frost, the snow, the ice, they are all dissolved presently, in order to which he *causeth the wind*, the south wind to blow, and the waters which were frozen flow again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the first cause: And in it we must take notice not only of the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air, and the face of the earth; what cannot he do, that doth this every winter, perhaps often every winter? But also of the goodness of God; hard weather doth not always continue, it would be sad if it should; he doth not contend for ever, but *reneweth the face of the earth*: As he remembered Noah, and released him, *Gen. viii. 1.* so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, *Gen. ii. 11, 12.* This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ; (for the Spirit is compared to the wind, *John iii. 8.*) both are sent for the melting of frozen souls; converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections and makes them flow, which before were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal, and yet gradual, it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable; such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it and restore it to itself.

3. For the distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty, ver. 14. as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them, they were under his peculiar government, the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting: their constitution a theocracy; they had the benefit of divine revelation, the great things of God's law were written to them, they had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions: No people but they went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy, they did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but *God shewed his word unto Jacob*, and by that word he made known to them his statutes and judgments. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them, *faith cometh by hearing* and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging; *He hath not dwelt so with every nation*, not with any nation; and *as for his judgments they have not known them*, nor are like to know them till the Messiah comes, and takes down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature. Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes, and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel was: let Israel therefore praise the Lord in the observation of these statutes; *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not to the world? Even so, Father, because it seemeth good in thine eyes.*

P S A L M CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to shew forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen; And thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise; he is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore doth all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all that shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold, if they be not raised and enlarged in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm. 1. He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively, ver. 1, 2. And those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, ver. 3-6. 2. He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise, ver. 7-10. and those that being endued with reason are capable of offering up this sacrifice, ver. 11-13. especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it than any other, ver. 14.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5. Let them praise the name of the LORD; for he commanded, and they were created. 6. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exultation, and conversing with narrow confines, can scarce admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

1. That there is above us a world of blessed angels, by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them; *Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*; and it is his glory that he hath such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needeth them, nor is, nor can be any way benefited by them; To that bright and happy world the psalmist hath an eye here, ver. 1, 2. In general, to the heavens, to the heights; the heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world, unto God in the heavens, and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that from thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised in the heights; that while we are so cold and low and flat in praising God, there are those above that are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work, they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts; and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made, they were lifted, armed and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is the meaning of the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them

to praise God, is not so easy to account for; I will not say, they do not heed it, because we find that *to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. but I will say, they do not need it, for they are continually praising God, and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore, when in singing this psalm we call upon the angels to praise God, as we did, *Psalms ciii. 20.* we mean, that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and in the best manner; that we are sure it is fit he should be so; that we are pleased to think he is so; and that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the *innumerable company of angels*, Heb. xii. 22.

2. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, in which God is praised, i. e. which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

(1.) What these creatures are that thus show us the way in praising of God, and whenever we look up and consider the heavens furnish us with matter for his praises. 1. There is the *sun, moon and stars*, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses in which we may see a faint shadow, (for so I must call it; not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the *Father of lights*, ver. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him; and the praises of the lesser lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we who worship the true God, only make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us; nay, as Levites to attend us, who as priests offer this spiritual sacrifice. 2. There is the *heavens of heavens* above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for *the heavens of heavens are the Lord's*, *Psalms cxv. 16.* and yet they cannot contain him, 1 Kings viii. 27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands here by the *heavens of heavens*, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as *Psalms lxxviii. 33.* We read of the heaven of heavens, whence God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, meaning the thunder. 3. There are the *waters that be above the heavens*, i. e. the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that depend on the word of him which is above the heavens*; for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God hath in his hand, wherewith he opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open.

(2.) Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them: *Let them praise the name of the Lord*, i. e. let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. 1. Because he made them, gave them their powers, and assigned them their places: *He commanded them* (as big as they are) out of nothing, and they were created at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command: for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spake with such authority. 2. Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posits, their powers and motions, ver. 6. *He hath established them for ever and ever*, i. e. to the end of time, a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. *He hath made a decree*, the law of creation, which shall not pass; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore need not be altered; by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered: All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation, must praise him still for their continuance: And we have reason to praise him, that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps. 8. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word. 9. Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars. 10. Beasts and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl. 11. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth. 12. Both young men and maidens, old men and children. 13. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

Considering that this earth and the atmosphere that surrounds it are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to enquire after those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it: and I know none more likely than this (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it) that even in this world, as dark and as bad as it is, God is praised: *Praise ye the Lord from the earth*, ver. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth; so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

1. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason, yet are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. Let the *dragons* or whales, that sport themselves in the mighty waters, *Psalms civ. 26.* dance before the Lord to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the Leviathan or whale, Job iv. 1. *All deeps*, and their inhabitants, praise God: the sea, and the animals there; the bowels of the earth, and the animals there: *Out of the depths* God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere, we meet with a great variety of meteors which being a kind of new productions (and some of them unaccountable) do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors, lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called: there are watery meteors, hail and snow, and the vapours of which they are generated; there are airy meteors, stormy winds; we know not whence they come, nor whither they go; whence their mighty force comes, nor how it is spent; But this we know, that be they never so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that, and no more than he appoints them; and by this Christ shewed himself to have a divine power, that he commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him. Those

that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, shew themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth, ver. 9. and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, mountains and all hills; from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise. The exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the fruitful trees of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised: others by their stateliness, as all cedars, those trees of the Lord, *Psalms civ. 16.* Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the beasts that run wild, and all cattle that are tame and in the service of man, ver. 10. Nay, even the creeping things are not sunk so low, nor do the flying fowl, soar so high, as not to be called upon to praise the Lord. Much of the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

2. Much more those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason, ought to employ them in praising God. *Kings of the earth, and all people*, ver. 11, 12. (1.) God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans*, and the *pars subdita*, kings of the earth and all people; it is by him, that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the princes and judges of the earth have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. (2.) God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. 1. Those of each rank, high and low; the praises of kings, and princes, and judges are demanded; those on whom God has put honour, must honour him with it; and the power they are intrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, puts them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God, and doing him more service than others; Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude. 2. Those of each sex, young men and maidens, who use to be merry together, let them turn it into this channel, let the mirth be sacred, that it may be pure. 3. Those of each age; old men must still bring forth his fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and children too must begin betimes to praise God: even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings this good work is perfected. A good reason is given, ver. 13. why all these should praise the name of the Lord, because his name alone is excellent, and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name, no name, no nature, but his, has it in full excellency. His glory is above both the earth and the heaven, and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise.

3. Most of all, his own people, that are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, ver. 14. Observe, 1. The dignity God has put upon his people, even the children of Israel, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. He exalteth their horn, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were in many respects honoured above any other nation, for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. It was their own honour that they were a people near unto God, his Segullah, his peculiar treasure; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. This blessing is now come upon the Gentiles through Christ, for they that were afar off, by his blood are made nigh, Ephes. ii. 13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all, when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory. 2. The duty God expects from them in consideration of this; Let those whom God honours, honour him: *Praise ye the Lord*; let him be the praise of all his saints, the object of their praise; for he is a praise to them. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, Deut. xiii. 21. Some by the horn of his people understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a prince and a saviour, who is indeed the praise of all his saints, and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are a people near to God.

P S A L M CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this to the Redeemer; it is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed and honoured with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the strong-hold of Zion, and settled his government there: But it looks farther to the kingdom of the Messiah, who, in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, goes forth conquering, and to conquer. To him, and his graces and glories we must have an eye in singing this psalm, which speaks, 1. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, ver. 1-5. 2. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, ver. 6-9.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD, Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. 2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Israel be joyful in their King. 3. Let them praise his name in the dance; let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. 4. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

(1.) The calls given God's Israel to praise. All his works were in the foregoing psalm excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then;

1. Who are called upon to praise God. Israel in general, the body of the church, ver. 2. the children of Zion particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near them, that are not put to travel far to them, surely more is expected to be done by them than by others in praising God. All true christians may call themselves the children of Zion, for in faith and hope we are come unto mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. The saints

must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification, they are therefore devoted to the glory of God and renewed by the grace of God, that *they may be unto him for a name and a praise.*

2. What must be the principle of this praise; and that is holy joy in God: *Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory.* Our praises of God, should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart, consists in making God our chief joy, and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. And we then give honour to God when we take pleasure in him. We must *be joyful in glory*, i. e. in him as our glory, and in the interest we have in him: and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of the praise. We must, by all proper ways, shew forth the praises of God. *Sing to the Lord*; we must entertain ourselves and proclaim his name by *singing praises unto him*, ver. 3. *singing aloud*, ver. 5. for we should sing psalms with all our hearts, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a *new song*, newly composed upon every special occasion; sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keeps them from growing threadbare. Let God be praised in the dance with timbrel and harp, according to the usage of the Old Testament-church very early, *Exod. xv. 20.* where we find God praised with *timbrels and dances*. They who from hence urge the use of music in religious worship, must by the same rule introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and *Judg. xxi. 21.* But whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel ordinance, none need provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel-canon for psalmody is, to *sing with the spirit and with the understanding*.

4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God; none must be let slip; but particularly, (1.) We must praise God in public, in the *solemn assembly*, ver. 1. *in the congregation of saints*; the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principal end and design of our coming together in religious assemblies is, that we may join together in praising of God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. (2.) We must praise him in private. *Let the saints be so transported with their joy in God as to sing aloud upon their beds*, when they awake in the night full of the praises of God, as David, *Psal. cxix. 62.* When God's Israel is brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers, that are entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud for joy of that. Upon their sick beds, their death beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

(2.) The cause given God's Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel its being as a people, as a church: made him what he is, so much different from other nations; let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might *shew forth his praise*, *Isa. xliii. 21.* Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; so it is in the original; for God said, *Let us make man*; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity.

2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them he is their King; he that gave being, no doubt may give law: and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wife and powerful King. *Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion, for behold thy King comes*, the King Messiah, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion; let all the children of Zion be joyful in him, and go forth to meet him with their hosannas, *Zech. ix. 9.*

3. God delights in them. He is a king that rules by love, and therefore to be praised; for *the Lord taketh pleasure in his people*, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose fidelity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to *take pleasure in his people*, *Psal. cxlvii. 11.*

4. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he hath in them, he hath prepared for their future glory: *He will beautify the meek, the humble and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions, and shew all meekness towards all men.* These men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach, nay, he will beautify them, they shall appear not only clear, but comely before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation; with temporal salvation; when God works remarkable deliverances for his people, they that had been among the pots become as the wings of a dove covered with silver, *Psal. lxxviii. 13.* but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day, when they *shine forth as the sun*. In the hopes of this, let them now in the darkest day sing a new song.

6. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; 7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; 8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron: 9. To execute upon them the judgment written: This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

The Israel of God is here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is the matter of their praise (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs) and the recompence of their praise; they that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity, shall be blessed with victory; Or, it may be taken as a farther expression of their praise, ver. 6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and then in a holy zeal for his honour let them take a two-edged sword in their hand, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom.

Now this may be applied,

1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan, and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who when they taught Israel the high praises of the Lord, did withal put a two-edged sword in their hand; David did too, for as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow, *2 Sam. i. 18.* taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they executed vengeance upon the heathen, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, *2 Sam.*

viii. 1. &c. and punishments upon the people, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, ver. 7. Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners, ver. 8. and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God, and to him who put it upon them they return it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time the high praises of God in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand, for they went forth to war singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, *2 Chron. xx. 23.* Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that the character, be thus severe, and upon the kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it, it is the judgment written.

They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth that shall be employed in the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, will but execute the judgment written, *Rev. xvii. 16, 17.* But since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violence either of subjects against their princes, or princes upon their subjects, or both upon their neighbours, under pretence of religion, for Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth, with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

2. To Christ's victories by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the two-edged sword, *Heb. iv. 12.* the sword of the Spirit, *Eph. vi. 17.* which is not enough to have in our armory, we must have it in our hand, as our Master had, when he said, *It is written.* Now, 1. With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness: Vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers; and by the consternation and conversion of those that would not repent, *Rev. vi. 15.* The strong holds of Satan were cast down, *2 Cor. x. 4.* Great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix. Satan, the God of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him: This is the honour of all christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious. 2. With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions, and through the grace of God subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet: This honour have all the saints. 3. The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, *Jude 15.* Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen, *Psalm ix. 17.* and punishments, everlasting punishments, upon the people: kings and nobles, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government, *Psalm ii. 3.* shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the gospel. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world, *1 Cor. vi. 2.* and in the prospect of that, let them praise the Lord, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to their lives end.

PSALM CL.

The first and last of these psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short and very memorable; but the scope of them is very different; the first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and perhaps was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to shew what is the design of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them; Again and again he calls, Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him, no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shews, 1. For what, and upon what account God is to be praised, ver. 1, 2. 2. How, and with what expressions of joy God is to be praised, ver. 3, 4, 5. 3. We must praise the Lord; it is every one's business, ver. 6. In singing this psalm we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God, and the praises with which he is and shall be for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

1. PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of power. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3. Praise him with the sound of a trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. 6. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD, Praise ye the LORD.

We are here with the greatest earnestness imaginable excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, it was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeating and inculcating of the call thus, intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed and much enlarged in; but which we are naturally backward to and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to it, and held to it, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

1. Whence this tribute of praise doth arise, and out of what part of his dominion it doth especially issue.

It comes, 1. From his sanctuary; praise him there: Let his priests, let his people that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he doth, in a special manner, both manifest his glory and communicate his grace? Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, *Ezek. xxxvii. 26.* Praise God in his holy ones, so some read it; We must take notice of the image of God, as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them, we must praise God in them. 2. From the firmament of his power: Praise him, because

because of his power and glory which appears in the firmament; its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it hath upon this earth. Let them that have their dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some by the sanctuary, as well as by the firmament of his power, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

2. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due: upon many accounts; particularly, 1. The works of his power, *ver. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts, for his mightiness*, so the word is; for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace; what he has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world; for the children of men in general, and for his own church and children in particular. 2. The glory and majesty of his being, *Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence*, (so Dr. Hammond reads it) not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite; but because he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great men and good men, *Deus non patitur hyperbolen*, all the danger is of saying too little; and therefore when we have done our utmost, we must own, that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to his excellent greatness.

3. In what manner this tribute must be paid; praise him with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple service, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* It is well we are not concerned to enquire, what sort of instruments each of these were? It is enough, that they were well known then. And our concern is, to know, 1. That thereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. 2. That in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. 3. That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections; *Non musico cordula sed cor.* Praise God with a strong faith, praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by an universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory. 4. That various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done in an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder but help one another. The New Testament concert, instead of this is, *with one mind and one mouth to glorify God*, Rom. xv. 6.

4. Who must pay this tribute, *ver. 6. Let every thing that has breath, praise the Lord*: He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary, and were employed in the temple service, but he concludes with a

call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and in every place as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered*, Mal. i. 11. Some think, in every thing that hath breath here, we must include the inferior creatures, as Gen. vii. 22. all in whose nostrils was the breath of life. They praise God according to their capacity: the singing of the birds is a sort of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, we would praise God if we could, do you do it for us. John in vision heard a song of praise from every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, Rev. v. 13. Others think the children of men only are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner breathed the breath of life, and they are become living souls, Gen. ii. 7. Now the gospel is ordered to be preached to every creature, to every human creature, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit for, but to spend it in praising God, and how can we spend it better? (1.) Prayers are called our breathings, Lam. iii. 56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we breathe in, which we could not live without. Having our breath in our nostrils, let us consider that it is still going forth, and will shortly go and not return: Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord, and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state to breathe, to breathe God's praises in a better and freer air.

The three first of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with Amen and Amen; the fourth with Amen, Hallelujah; but the last, and in it, the whole book concludes only with Hallelujah, because the six last psalms are wholly taken up in praising of God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think this last psalm is designed to represent us to the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. And the musical instruments here said to be used, are no more to be understood literally than the gold and pearls and precious stones which are said to adorn the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 18, 19. But as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate, that the praises the saints offer there, are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness. Hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing that we have been acquainted with on earth, but are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth, as they do it that are in heaven. And therefore let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work, because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. Hallelujah is the word there, Rev. xix. 1—3. Let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. Hallelujah, praise the Lord.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the Book of

PROVERBS.

We have now before us, 1. A new Author, or Penman rather, or Pen (if you will) made use of by the Holy Ghost, for the making known the mind of God to us, writing as moved by the finger of God, so the Spirit of God is called; and that is Solomon: through his hand came this book of Scripture, and the two that follow it, Ecclesiastes and Canticles, a Sermon and a Song. Some think he wrote Canticles when he was young, Proverbs in the midst of his days, and Ecclesiastes when he was old. In the title of his song he only writes himself Solomon, perhaps, because he wrote before his accession to the throne, being filled with the Holy Ghost when he was young. In the title of his Proverbs he writes himself the son of David, king of Israel, for then he ruled over all Israel. In the title of his Ecclesiastes he writes himself the son of David, king of Jerusalem, because then, perhaps, his influence was grown less upon the distant tribes, and he confined himself very much in Jerusalem. Concerning this author we may observe, 1. That he was a king, and a king's son. The penmen of scripture hitherto, were most of them men of the first rank in the world, as Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and now Solomon: but after him the inspired writers were generally poor prophets, men of no figure in the world, because that dispensation was approaching in which God would choose the weak and foolish things of the world, to confound the wise and mighty, and the poor should be employed to evangelize. Solomon was a very high king, and his dominions very large, a king of the first magnitude, and yet addicted himself to the study of divine things, and was a prophet and prophet's son. It is no disparagement to the greatest princes and potentates in the world to instruct those about them in religion, and the laws of it. (2.) That he was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge, in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne, his prayer was exemplary, *Give me a wife and an understanding heart*; the answer to it was encouraging, he had that, and all other things were added to him. Now here we find what good use he made of the wisdom God gave him, he not only governed himself and his kingdom with it, but he gave rules of wisdom to others also, and transmitted them to posterity. Thus must we trade with the talents with which we are trusted, according as they are. (3.) That he was one who had his faults, and in his latter end turned aside from those good ways of God which in this book he had directed others in; we have the story of it 1 Kings xi. and a sad story it is, that the penman of such a book as this should apostatize as he did; tell it not in Gath, but let those who are most eminently useful take warning by this, not to be proud or secure: and let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions, though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them.

2. We have here a new way of writing, in which divine wisdom is taught us by proverbs or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves, and are not connected with one another. We have had divine laws, histories and songs, and now divine proverbs: such various methods has divine wisdom used for our instruction, that, no stone being left unturned to do us good, we may be inexcusable if we perish in our folly. Teaching by proverbs was, 1. An ancient way of teaching, it was the most ancient way among the Greeks; the seven wise men of Greece, had each of them some one saying that they valued themselves upon, and that made them famous: these sentences were inscribed on pillars, and had in great veneration as that which was said to come down from heaven. *A Cælo descendit sapienza*, Know thyself. (2.) It was a plain and easy way of teaching, which cost neither the teachers nor the learners much pains, nor put their understandings or memories to the stretch. Long periods and arguments far fetched, must be laboured both by him that frames them and by him that takes them, while a proverb that carries both its sense and its evidence in a little compass, is presently apprehended and subscribed to, and is easily retained. Both David's devotions and Solomon's instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression to those who minister about holy things both in praying and preaching. (3.) It was a very profitable way of teaching and served admirably well to answer the end. The word *Alaphal*, here used for a proverb, comes from a word that signifies to rule or have dominion, because of the commanding power and influence which wise and weighty sayings have upon the children of men, he that teacheth by them doth *dominari in conscientibus*. It is easy to observe how the world is governed by proverbs: *As faith the proverbs of the ancients*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. or, as the vulgar expresses it, *As the old saying is*, goes very far with the most of men in forming their notions and fixing their resolves. Much of the wisdom of the ancients has been handed down to posterity by proverbs; and some think we may judge of the temper and character of a nation by the complexion of its vulgar proverbs. Proverbs in conversation are like axioms in philosophy, maxims in law, and postulata in the mathematics, which no body disputes, but every body endeavours to expound, so as to have them on their side. Yet there are many corrupt proverbs which tend to debauch men's minds and harden them in sin. The devil has his proverbs, and the world and the flesh have their proverbs, which reflect reproach on God and religion, as *Ezek. xii. 22---xviii. 2.* to guard us against the corrupt influences of which God has his proverbs, which are all wise and good, and tend to make us so. These proverbs of Solomon were not merely a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon. The very first of them *chap. i. 7.* agrees with what God said to man in the beginning, *Job xxviii. 28.* *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*; so that though Solomon was great, and his name may serve as much as any man's to recommend his writings, yet behold a greater than Solomon is here. It is God, by Solomon, that here speaks to us; I say to us, for these proverbs were written for our learning, and when Solomon speaketh to his Son, the exhortation is said to *speak to us as unto children*, Heb. xii. 5. And as we have no books so useful to us in our devotions as David's psalms, so we have none so serviceable to us, for the right ordering of our conversations as Solomon's proverbs, which, as David sayeth of the commandments, are *exceeding broad*, containing in a little compass, a compleat body of divine ethics, politics, and oeconomics, exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition, and every turn of conversation. The learned Bishop Hall has drawn up a system of moral philosophy out of Solomon's proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The nine first chapters of this book are reckoned as a preface, by way of exhortation to the study and practice of Wisdom's rules, and caution against those things which would hinder therein. We have then the first volume of Solomon's proverbs, *chap. x.---xxiv.* After that a second volume, *chap. xxv.---xxix.* And Agar's prophecy, *chap. xxx.* and Lemuel's, *chap. xxxi.* The scope of all is one and the same, to direct us to order our conversation aright, as that in the end we may see the salvation of the Lord. The best comment on those rules is to be ruled by them.

CHAP. I.

These that read David's psalms, especially those towards the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture, and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; and doubtless there is a time for them, and if there be a heaven upon earth it is in them: but while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them, we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the conduct of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet, as to make us devout, to make the face to shine before men, in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn towards God in holy and pious affections. In this chapter we have, 1. The title of the book, shewing the general scope and design of it, ver. 1-6. 2. The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration, ver. 7-9. 3. A necessary caution against bad company, ver. 10-19. 4. A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the children of men, and the certain ruin of those that turn a deaf ear to those reasonings, ver. 20-33.

1. **T**HE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; 2. To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding; 3. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice and judgment, and equity; 4. To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5. A wise man will hear and will increase learning: and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6. To understand a proverb and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who in the beginning of his book, proposeth his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

1. Who wrote these wise sayings, ver. 1. They are the proverbs of Solomon. (1.) His name signifies peaceable, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered it, both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion, for *is any afflicted? let him pray*. Solomon who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction, for when the churches had rest they were edified: In times of peace we should learn ourselves and teach others, that which in troublous times both they and we must practise. (2.) He was the son of David: it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he feared the better for it, 1 Kings xi. 12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him, Psalm xxii. 1. the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The generation of the upright are sometimes thus blessed that they are made blessings, eminent blessings in their day. Christ is often called the son of David, and Solomon was a type of him in this as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables or proverbs. (3.) He was king of Israel: a king and yet no disparagement to him to be an instructor of the ignorant and a teacher of babes. King of Israel, that people among whom God was known, and his name was great, among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which excelled all men's, 1 Kings iv. 30-x. 24. which was an honour to Israel, that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms, every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying; his servants that attended him and heard his wisdom, had among them collected three thousand proverbs of his which they wrote in their day-books, but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to near a thousand: in these he was divinely inspired. Some think out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus, and the wisdom of Solomon were compiled, in which are many excellent say-

ings, and of great use, but, take all together, they are far short of this book. The Roman emperors had each of them their symbol or motto, as many have now with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the product of that extraordinary wisdom, which God had endued him with.

2. For what end written, ver. 2, 3, 4. not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates, and study them close.

This book will help us,

(1.) To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them. That we may know wisdom and instruction; that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation; may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves, and give instructions to others.

(2.) To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; to perceive the words of understanding; to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves; and our own use, that we may discern things that differ, and not be imposed upon, and may approve things that are excellent, and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, Phil. i. 10.

(3.) To order our conversation aright in every thing, ver. 3. This book will give, that we may receive the instruction of wisdom, that knowledge which will guide our practice in justice, judgment, and equity, ver. 3. which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, that are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is to teach us that wisdom. Justice in the duties of the first table, judgment in those of the second table, and equity, i. e. sincerity in both, so some distinguish them.

3. For whose use they were written, ver. 4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially, 1. For the simple, to give subtilty to them. The instructions here given are plain and easy, and level to the meanest capacity; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein; and those are likely to receive benefit by them, that are sensible of their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive those instructions in their light and power, though they be simple will hereby be made subtil graciously crasy to know the sin they should avoid, and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is harmless as the dove, by observing Solomon's rules, may become wise as the serpent, and he that has been foolishly foolish, when he begins to govern himself by the word of God, becomes graciously wise.

2. For young people, to give them knowledge and discretion. Youth is the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received: it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can it receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash and heady, and inconsiderate; man is born like the wild ass's colt, and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints and managed by the rules we find here. And if young people will but take heed to their ways, according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

4. What good use would be made of them, ver. 5, 6. Those that are young and simple, may by them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon's school, as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No, here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good, wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the wise man will hear, wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market place. Note, Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A wise man is sensible of his own defects (*plurima ignora, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro*) and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may increase in learning, may know more, and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it: As long as we live we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbins, *Qui non auget scientiam amittit de ea*; if our stock of knowledge be not

not increasing, it is wasting; and they that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; those *perfect the man of God*.

A wife man, by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also.

1. As a counsellor. *A man of understanding* in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another, and with his own observations, shall by degrees attain unto *wife counsels*, i. e. he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and intrusted with the conduct of public affairs: he shall come to *fit at the helm*, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those that God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom, *Job xxix, 15. I was eyes to the blind*.

2. As an interpreter, *ver. 6. To understand a proverb*. Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles, and resolving hard questions, which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the knots with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here, he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable to the best purposes. They shall *understand a proverb, even the interpretation*, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wife saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it. *The words of the wife*, are sometimes *dark sayings*: In St. Paul's epistle there was that which was *hard to be understood*; but to those who being well versed in the scriptures know how to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, they will be easy and safe. So that if you ask them, *Have ye understood all these things?* they may answer, *Yea, Lord*. Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people therefore should aim to be intelligent, and run to and fro, i. e. take pains in the use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

7. ¶ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. 8. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. 9. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Solomon having undertaken to *teach a young man knowledge and discretion*, here lays down two general rules to be observed in order therunto, and those are, to fear God, and honour his parents; which two fundamental laws of morality, Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, though the former of them wretchedly corrupted: *Primum, deos immortales cole—parentesque honora*.

To make young people such as they should be,

1. Let them have regard to God as their supreme, *ver. 7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; it is the principal part of knowledge*, so the margin; it is the head of knowledge; that is, 1. Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that *God is to be feared*, to be revered, served, and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge, that those know nothing who do not know this. 2. In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge, this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us, unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought unto obedience to him. *If any man do his will, he shall know of his doctrine*, John vii. 17. 3. All our knowledge, as it must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough that know how to fear God, that are careful in every thing to please him, and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the alpha and omega of knowledge.

To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes that *fools* (i. e. atheists, who have no regard to God) *despise wisdom and instruction*; having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath, and obtain his favour. They that say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, who are so far from fearing him, that they set him at defiance, no wonder, that they desire not the knowledge of his ways; but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools that do not fear God, and value the scriptures; and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit, they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

2. Let them have regard to their parents, as their superiors, *ver. 8, 9. My son hear the instruction of thy father*. He means, not only that he must have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, not only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught, to look upon him as their father, and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children; but he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

(1.) He takes it for granted, that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and with all the authority they have give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do, we must tell them why: But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law: Abraham will not only catechize, but command his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

(2.) He chargeth children both to receive and retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them.

1. To receive them with readiness: hear the instruction of thy father; hear it, and heed it; hear it and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it.

2. To retain them with resolution: forsake not their law; think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayst live at large; no, *the law of thy mother* was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken: Thou wast trained up in the way, in which thou shouldest go, and therefore when thou art old thou must not depart from it. Some observe, that whereas the Gentile ethics, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their father, the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.

(3.) He recommends this as that which is very graceful, and will put an honour upon us. The instructions and laws of thy parents carefully observed and lived up to, *shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head*, *ver. 9*, such an ornament as is in the sight of God of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear gold chains about their necks. Let divine truths and commands be to us as a coronet or a collar of SS, which

are badges of first-rate honours, let us value them and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

10. ¶ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 11. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: 12. Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those that go down into the pit: 13. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: 14. Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse. 15. My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. 16. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. 17. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. 18. And they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives. 19. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain: which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out, and keeping in the paths of wisdom, and that is, to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, *Psalms i. 1*. and so do Solomon's proverbs; for nothing is more destructive, both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation, *ver. 10. My son, whom I love*, and have a tender concern for, *if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*: This is good advice for parents to give their children when they send them abroad into the world; it is the firm that St. Peter gave to his new converts, *Acts ii. 40. Save yourselves from the untoward generation*. Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to find others into the paths of the destroyer; they will end e: firm r: love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech: with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake, if they think that by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound as it were in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves: for they will have so much the more to answer for. 2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them: *Consent thou not*; and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have thee to do: have no fellowship with them.

To enforce this caution,

1. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the arts of woe which they have for the bewailing of unstable souls. He instanceth in highwaymen, that do what they can to draw others into their gang, *ver. 11—12*. See here what they would have the young man to do: *Come with us*; *ver. 11*. let us have thy company, at first they pretend to ask no more; but the companionship iseth higher, *ver. 14. Cast in thy lot among us*; come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together; thou shalt fare as we fare; and let us all have one purse; that what we get together we may spend merrily together, for that is it they aim at.

To unreasonable insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their prey into the snare.

(1.) Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and hate those that are innocent and never gave them any provocation, bear so by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them, *Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them*; they are conscious to themselves of no crime, and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed, therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O how sweet it will be to *swallow them up alive*! *ver. 12*. which these bloody men would do men as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb: If it be objected, that the remains of the murdered will betray the murderers: the answer, no danger of that, we will swallow them whole as those that are buried. Who could imagine that the human nature should degenerate so far, as that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another!

(2.) Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it, *ver. 13*. we shall find all precious substance by following this trade; what though we venture our necks by it, we shall fill our houses with spoil. See here, 1. The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow, it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbers, *Psalms lxxii. 10*. as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet in their account it is precious; and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands that they over-value the wealth of this world, and look on it as *precious substance*. 2. The abundance of it which they promise themselves; we shall fill our houses with it. Those that trade with sin, promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast account. All this will I give thee, (saith the tempter) but they only dream that they eat; the houseful dwindle into scarce a handful, like the grass on the house-tops.

2. He shews the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them, *ver. 15. My son, walk not thou in the way with them*, i. e. do not associate with them, get and keep as far off from them as thou canst, *refrain thy foot from their path*, do not take example by them, nor do as they do. Such is the corruption of our nature, that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider,

(1.) How pernicious their way is in its own nature, *ver. 16. Their feet run to evil*, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind, for they make haste to shed blood. Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but the longer they continue in it, the faster they run and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough, and resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely, let us lay wait for blood, *ver. 11*. but thou wilt find they are all in haste, so much hath Satan filled their hearts.

(2.) How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein, 1. They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain, she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, *ver. 17*. But we think ourselves of more value than many sparrows, and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God hath made us wiser than the fowls of heaven, (*Job xxxv. 11*.) and shall we then be as stupid as they? 2. They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we

sometimes

sometimes perceive them to have: For the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare in the flight of the bird, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, see the thief, the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they might see hell before them, their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose; they rush into sin and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle.

For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, *ver.* 18, 19. They lay wait and lurk privily for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove contrary to their intention to be for *their own blood, their own lives*; they will come at length to a shameful end: and if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis, that pursues them. *Vengeance suffers them not to live.* Their greediness of gain hurries them upon those practices, which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. Those have little reason to be proud of their property, in that which *takes away the life of the owners*, and then passeth to other masters: and what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life, for then he can enjoy the world no longer, much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon instances only in this temptation to rob on the high way, yet he intends thereby to warn us against all other evils, which sinners entice men to; such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean, they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

20. ¶ Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: 21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*, 22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23. Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24. ¶ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof: 26. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; 27. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear the LORD. 30. They would have none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. 31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33. But whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Solomon having shewed how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shews how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

1. By whom God calls to us; by wisdom. It is *wisdom* that crieth without. The word is plural, wisdoms, for as there is infinitive wisdom in God, so there is the manifold wisdom of God. Eph. iii. 10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and as in every will, so in every word of God there is counsel. (1.) *Human understanding is wisdom*, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, *Job xxxviii. 36.* By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them; *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*; and wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, saying *This is the way*, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice, but sometimes it cries. (2.) *Civil government is wisdom*, it is God's ordinance, magistrates are his vicegerents. God by David had said to the fools deal not foolishly, *Psal. lxxv. 4.* In the opening of the gates, and in the places of concourse, where courts were kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation, call to wicked people in God's name to repent and reform. (3.) *Divine revelation is wisdom*, all its dictate, of all its laws are wise as wisdom itself. God doth, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priest's lips which bear knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of his word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God in his word not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. *Come now, let us reason together*, *Isa. i. 18.* (4.) *Christ himself is wisdom*, is wisdoms, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not only the essential wisdom, but the eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us and to whom he has committed all judgment, he it is therefore, that here both pleads with sinners, and passeth sentence on them; he calls himself wisdom, *Luke vii. 35.*

2. How he calls to us, and in what manner. (1.) Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said, and all are concerned to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published without in the streets, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the chief places of concourse, among the common people that pass and repass in the opening of the gates, and in the city. It is comfortable calling the net of the gospel there where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then some will be enclosed. This was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, and in crowds of people, and in secret said nothing, *John xviii. 20.* and charged his ministers to proclaim his gospel on the house top, *Matt. x. 27.* God saith, *Isa. xlv. 19. I have not spoken in secret, there is no speech or language where wisdom's voice is not heard.* Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue assumed of itself. (2.) Very pathetically; she cries, and again she cries as one in earnest; *Jesus stood and cried*, she utters her voice, she utters her words with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

3. What the call of God and Christ is.

(1.) He reproves sinners for their folly, and their obstinate persisting in it, *ver.* 22. Observe, 1. Who they are that wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised; such as love simplicity, and therefore might justly be

despised of; but we must use the means even with those that we have little hopes of, because we do not know what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to: (2.) *Simple ones that love simplicity.* Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad that love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings, and flattering themselves in wickedness. (2.) *Scornors, that delight in scorning.* Proud people, that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them; jovial people that banter all mankind, and makes a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious. (3.) *Fools, that hate knowledge.* None but fools hate knowledge; those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And they are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed, and hate to be reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. 2. How the reproof is expressed. How long will ye do so? This implies, that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners, and not their ruin; that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness: that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

(2.) He invites them to repent and become wise, *ver.* 23. And here, 1. The precept is plain. *Turn you at my reproof.* We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil, if we do not turn from it to do that which is good, for this end the reproof was given. Turn, i. e. return to your right mind; turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live. 2. The promises are very encouraging. They that love simplicity, find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way, they cannot turn by any power of their own; to this God answers, *Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you*: set yourselves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good, which without that grace you could not do. Help thyself and God will help thee; stretch forth thy withered hand, and Christ will strengthen and heal it. 1. The author of his grace is the Spirit, and that is promised, *I will pour out my spirit unto you* as oil, as water, you shall have the Spirit in abundance, rivers of living water, *John vii. 38.* our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. 2. The means of this grace is the word, which if we take it aright, will turn us, it is therefore promised, *I will make known my words unto you*, not only speak them to you, but make them known, i. e. give you to understand them. Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it and submit to it.

(3.) He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, *ver.* 24—32. Wisdom having called sinners to return, pauses awhile, to see what effect the call has, *hearkens and hears, but they speak not aright*, *Jer. viii. 6.* and therefore she goes on to tell them, what will be the end hereof.

1. The crime is recited, and it is highly provoking.

See what it is, for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is in short, rejecting Christ, and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God, and from the dominion of the law of sin.

(1.) Christ called to them, warned them of their danger, he stretched out his hand to offer them mercy; nay to have helped them out of their miserable condition, stretched out his hand for them to take hold of, but they refused, and no man regarded; some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were wilful, and though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they refused, *ver.* 24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God stretched out his hand in mercies bestowed upon them, and when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all in vain, they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

(2.) Christ reproved and counselled them; not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counsels them to do better, those are reproofs of instruction, and evidences of love and good will, but they set at nought all the counsel as not worth heeding, and would have none of his reproof; as if it were below them to be reproved by him, as if they had never done any thing that deserved reproof, *ver.* 25. This is repeated, *ver.* 30. They would none of my counsel, but rejected it with disdain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them heinously, *Jer. vi. 10.* Nay, they despised all my reproof, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of. Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

(3.) They were exhorted to submit to the government of right reason and religion, but they rebelled against both. 1. Reason should not rule them, for they hated knowledge, *ver.* 29. hated the light of divine truth, because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, *John iii. 20.* They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. 2. Religion should not rule them, for they did not choose the fear of the Lord, but chose to walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. They were pressed to set God always before them, but they chose rather to cast him behind their backs. Note, Those who do not choose the fear of the Lord, shew that they have no knowledge.

2. The sentence is pronounced, and it is certainly ruining. They that will not submit to God's government, will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy, when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, *Prov. xxix. 1.* The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day, and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnest in the present judgments.

1. Now sinners are in prosperity and secure, they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But (1.) Their calamity will come, *ver.* 26. Sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of death. Other troubles will come in mind, in estate, which will convince them of the folly of setting God at a distance. (2.) Their calamity will put them to a great fright. Fear seizeth them, and they are jealous that bad will be worse; when public judgments are abroad the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrites, death is the king of terrors to them, *Job xv. 21.* &c. *xviii. 11.* &c. this fear will be their continual torment. (3.) According to the fright will it be to them. *Thy fear shall come*, i. e. the thing they are afraid of shall befall them, it shall come as desolation, as a mighty deluge bearing down all before it, it shall be their destruction, their total and final destruction, and it shall come as a whirlwind, which suddenly and forcibly drives away

away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God, lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. (4.) Their fright will then be turned into despair; *distress and anguish shall come upon them*, for being fallen into the pit they were afraid of they shall see no way to escape, *ver. 27.* Saul cries out, *2 Sam. i. 9.* *Anguish is come upon me*; and in hell there is *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* for anguish; *Tribulation and anguish to the soul of the sinner*, the fruit of the indignation and wrath of the righteous God, *Rom. ii. 8, 9.*

2. Now God pities their folly, but he will then *laugh at their calamity*, *ver. 26.* I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel. They that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will *laugh at them*, *Psal. lii. 6.* for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God's compassions! they have so long sinned against mercy, that they have now quite sinned it away; *his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity.* Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should *turn and live.* *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries.*

3. Now God is ready to hear their prayers and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it, but then the door will be shut and they shall cry in vain, *ver. 28.* *Then shall they call upon me* when it is too late, *Lord, Lord, open to us*; then would they gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of, but *I will not answer*, because when I called they would not answer; all the answer then will be, *Depart from me, I know you not.* This has been the case with some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answered not by *Urim* or by *prophets*; but ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer and hope of speeding; and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will *seek him early*, i. e. earnestly, but in vain, *they shall not find him*, because they sought him not when he might be found, *Isa. lv. 6.* The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.

4. Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices, but then they will have enough of them, *ver. 31.* according to the proverb, *Let men drink as they brew, they shall eat the fruit of their own way*, their wages shall be according to their work, and as was their choice, *so shall their doom be*, *Gal. vi. 7, 8.* Note, 1. There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, *Jam. i. 15.* Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but *eat the fruit of their own way.* 2. They that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is *their own device*, let them make their boast of it. *God chooseth their delusions*, *Isa. lxxvi. 4.*

5. Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity, but then both shall help to aggravate their ruin, *ver. 32.* 1. They are now proud that they can turn away from God, and get clear of the restraints of religion, but that very thing shall slay them; the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. 2. They are now proud of their own security and sensuality, but *the ease of the simple* (so the margin reads it) *shall slay them*; the more secure they are, the more certain and the more dreadful will their destruction be, *and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them*; by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to their world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in their evil ways.

6. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom, *ver. 33.* *Who hearkeneth unto me*, and will be ruled by me, he shall, 1. Be safe; he shall dwell under the special protection of heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt. 2. He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but *quiet from the fear of it.* *Though the earth be removed yet shall they not fear.* Would we be safe from evil and quiet from the fear of it, let religion always rule us, and the word of God be our counsellor: That is the way to *dwell safely* in this world, and to *be quiet from the fear of evil* in the other world.

CHAP. II.

Solomon having foretold the destruction of those that are obstinate in their impiety, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught; And 1. He shews them that if they would diligently use the means of knowledge and grace, they should obtain of God that knowledge and grace which they seek, *ver. 1-9.* 2. He shews them of what unspeakable advantage it would be to them. (1.) *It would preserve them from the snares of evil men*, *ver. 10-15.* and of evil men, *ver. 16-19.* (2.) *It would direct them into, and keep them in the way of good men*, *ver. 20, 21, 22.* So that in this chapter we are taught, both how to get wisdom, and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it, nor receive it in vain.

1. **M**Y son, if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee: 2. So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: 3. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: 4. If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure: 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6. For the LORD giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. 7. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Job had asked long before this, *Where shall wisdom be found? and whence cometh wisdom?* *Job xxviii. 12-20.* and had given this general answer, *ver. 23.* *God knoweth the place of it*; but Solomon here goes farther, and tells us both where we may find it, and how we may get it.

1. We are here told,

1. What means we must use that we may obtain wisdom.

(1.) We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom which is able to make us wise to salvation, *ver. 1, 2.* 1. We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us. We must *incline our ear and apply our hearts* to them, as to wisdom and understanding itself; many wise things may be found in human compositions, but divine revelation, and true religion built upon it, is all wisdom. 2. We must accordingly receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as

the promises, without murmuring or disputing; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* 3. We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive but retain the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us. 4. We must incline our ear to them, i. e. we must lay hold on all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. 5. We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

(2.) We must be much in prayer, *ver. 3.* We must *cry after knowledge*, as one that is ready to perish for hunger begs hard for bread; faint desires will not prevail, we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge, and our own want of it. We must *cry as new-born babes* after the sincere milk of the word, *1 Pet. ii. 1.* We must *lift up our voice for understanding*, lift it up to heaven, from thence come good and perfect gifts must be expected, *James i. 17.* *Job xxxviii. 34.* We must *give our voice to understanding*, so the word is; *Speak for it; vote for it; submit the tongue to the command of wisdom*; we must confer our voice to it: having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it; Solomon could write *probatum est*, upon this method, he prayed for wisdom, and so obtained it.

(3.) We must be willing to take pains, *ver. 4.* we must *seek it as silver*, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world, and labouring in search of it as those that dig in the mines, who undergo great toils and endure great hazards, with indefatigable industry and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the ore; or as those that will be rich, rise up early; and sit up late, and turn every stone to get money, and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.

2. What success we may hope for in the use of these means: for labour shall not be in vain: for, 1. We shall know how to manage our acquaintance and communion with God: *Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord*, *ver. 5.* i. e. thou shalt know how to worship him aright, that thou shalt enter into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance, and be enabled to answer the end of its institution. *Thou shalt find the knowledge of God*, which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by agreeable affections towards him and adorations of him. We shall know how to carry our hearts towards all men, *ver. 9.* *Thou shalt understand by the word of God, right counsel, and judgment, and equity*; shall learn those principles of justice and charity, and fair dealing, as shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation, shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to all their due; for those that do not do justly, do not rightly understand it. This will lead them into every good path, for the scriptures will be the way of God's perfect. Note, Those have the best knowledge that know how to do. *Psal. ex. 10.*

3. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuit of wisdom; we must take our encouragement herein from God only, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* (1.) God has wisdom to bestow, *ver. 6.* The Lord not only is wise himself, but he gives wisdom, and that is more than the wisest man in the world can do, for it is God's prerogative to open the eyes of understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is a gift, he freely gives, and he gives it liberally, *James i. 5.* has given it to many, and is ready to give it to him therefore let us apply ourselves for it.

(2.) He hath blessed the world with a revelation of his will. Out of his mouth, by the law and the prophets, by the wisdom of old and by his ministers, both which are his mouth to the children of men, *Sam. x. 1.* *and understanding*; such a discovery of truth and good as, once discovered and receive the impressions of, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement and encouragement to search after wisdom, that we have the scriptures to search, in which we may find it if we seek it diligently.

(3.) He hath particularly provided that good men, who are sincerely disposed to do his will, shall have that knowledge and understanding which is necessary for them, *John vii. 17.* Let them seek, and they shall find it, let them ask, and it shall be given them, *1 Cor. vii. 8.* Observe here, 1. Who they are that are thus favoured: They are the righteous, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in right consciences; and those that walk uprightly, that are honest in their dealings both with God and man, and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are his saints, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. 2. What is it that is provided for them? 1. Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom itself, sound wisdom, is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their head, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word, is a Spirit of wisdom in the souls of them that are sanctified; that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; and it is sound wisdom, its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage. 2. Satisfaction; some read it, *He lays up substance for the righteous*, not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort, *Pro. viii. 21.* Riches are things that are not, and they that have them only fancy themselves happy; but what is laid up in the promises and in heaven for the righteous, will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally happy. 3. Protection. Even they that walk uprightly may be brought into danger for the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be a buckler to them, so that nothing that happens to them shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any frightful apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. *Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield.* It is their way, the paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns and takes care of. (4.) Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he preserved the way of his saints, that it be not perverted; and so preserved them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. *Work out your salvation, for God works in you.*

10. ¶ When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul: 11. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12. To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things. 13. Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; 14. Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked. 15. Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths. 16. To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger

stranger which flattereth with her words: 17. Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. 18. For her house inclineth unto death, and her path unto the dead. 19. None that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. 20. That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 21. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 22. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

The scope of these verses is to shew, 1. What great advantage true wisdom will be of to us; it will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will therein do us a greater kindness, than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world. 2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us; we must use it for our own conduct in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves, whether we have this wisdom or no; this tree will be known by its fruits: if we be truly wise, it will appear by our care to avoid all evil company and evil practices.

This wisdom will be of use to us.

1. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and consequently from the evil of trouble that attends it. In general, ver. 10, 11. when wisdom has entire possession of thee, it will keep thee. And when has it an entire possession of us? 1. When it has dominion over us: when it not only fills the head with notions, but enters into the heart, and has a commanding power and influence upon that; when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions: when it enters into the heart, as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image, then it is likely to do us good. 2. When we have delight in it; when knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul; when thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and are subject to its rules of choice, and with satisfaction; when thou callest the practice of virtue not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious godliness the most comfortable life a man can live in this world, then thou wilt find the benefit of it. Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even that must be pleasant to the soul. When it comes to this with us, discretion shall preserve us and keep us; God keeps the way of his saints, ver. 8. by giving them discretion to keep out of harm's way, to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart, will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within and temptations without, *Ezek. ix. 16—18.*

More particularly, wisdom will preserve us.

(1.) From men of corrupt principles: atheistical, profane men that make it their business to debauch young men's judgments, and insinuate into their minds prejudices against religion, and arguments for vice. It will deliver thee from the way of the evil man, ver. 12. and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death, from the way in which he walks, and in which he would persuade thee to walk. The enemy is spoken of as one, ver. 12. an evil man, but afterwards as many, ver. 13. there is a club, a gang of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom and the interests of it.

1. They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good; they speak forward things; they say all they can against religion, both to shew their own enmity to it, and to dissuade others from it. They are advocates for Satan, they plead for Baal, and pervert the right ways of the Lord. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin; and with what forwardness will they carp at the word of God! Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men, or at least, from being ensnared by them.

2. They are themselves apostates from that which is good; and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion hath, witness Julian, ver. 13. They leave the paths of uprightness, which they were trained up in, and had set out in; shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, to walk in the ways of darkness, in those wicked ways which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are they that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways, *Psal. lxxii. 5. 1. John ii. 11.*

3. They take a pleasure in sin; both in committing it themselves, and in seeing others commit it, ver. 14. They rejoice in an opportunity to do evil, and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. It is sport to a fool to do mischief; nor is any sight more grateful to them, than to see the forwardness of the wicked, to see those that are hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground, see *Rom. i. 32.* such a height of impiety are they arrived to.

4. They are resolute in sin, ver. 15. Their ways are crooked, a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions, and break the force of them; some fly excuse, some subtle evasion or other, their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness, and in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth, they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences: for they are forward in their paths, i. e. they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(2.) From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses, the lusts of the unsanctified mind; these lead to fleshly lusts, which defile the body, that living temple, but withal war against the soul. The adulteress is here called the strange woman, because no man that hath any wisdom or goodness in him, will have any acquaintance with her; she is to be shunned by every Israelite, as if she were a heathen and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A strange woman indeed, utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour.

It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress, considering,

1. How false she is; and who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery! She is a strange woman; for, 1. She is false to him whom she enticeth; she speaks him fair, tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what a kindness she has for him, but she flatters with her words, she has no true affection for him, nor any desire for his welfare, no more than Delilah had of Samson; all she designs is to pick his pocket, and gratify a base lust of her own. 2. She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligation she lies under to him; he was the guide of her youth, by marrying him she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his conduct, with a promise to attend him only, and forsake all other; but she has forsaken him, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should

be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is a partaker with her in her falsehood. 3. She is false to God himself; she forgetteth the covenant of her God, the marriage covenant, ver. 17. to which God is not only a witness, but a party, for he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to him to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against, but her God, who therefore will judge whoremongers and adulterers, because they despise the oath, and break the covenant, *Ezek. xvii. 18. Mal. ii. 14.*

2. How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, ver. 18. 19. Let others harms be our warnings; take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, 1. The ruin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God, and the sword of his justice. They that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the naughty woman, but from the naughty house; for the house inclines to death, it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death: and her paths unto Rephaim, to the giants, so some read it, the sinners of the old world, who living in luxury and excess of riot, were cut down out of time, and their foundation overthrown with a flood. Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures, with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them, where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched. See *Matt. v. 28, 29.* 2. Their repentance and their recovery is extremely hazardous; none, or next to none, that go unto her, return again. It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their hold of the paths of life, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly befuddled and bewitched with those base lusts.

Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the strange woman, besides the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution, 1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom: Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel, and proved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul, by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adulteress which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant of our God, which inclines to death, and which, when it has got an undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

2. This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good, ver. 20. That thou mayest walk in the ways of good men. We must therefore avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, that we may walk in good ways; must therefore cease to do evil, that we may learn to do well. Note, 1. There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men, the way in which good men as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked. 2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way, and walk therein, *Jer. vi. 16. Heb. vi. 12—xii. 1.* and we must not only walk in that way a while, but we must keep it, keep in it, and never turn aside out of it: The paths of the righteous are the paths of life, which all that are wise having taken hold of, will keep their hold of. "That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets, (so Bishop Patrick paraphraseth it) and be preferred in the paths of the righteous men who followed after them."

We must not only choose our way in general, by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

Two reasons are here given why we should thus choose,

1. Because men's integrity will be their establishment, ver. 21. It will be the establishment, 1. Of their persons; The upright shall dwell in the land, peaceably and quietly, as long as they live; and their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the good will of their neighbours, and intitles them to God's special favour. 2. Of their families; the perfect in their posterity shall remain in it: They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type.

2. Because men's iniquity will be their destruction, ver. 22. See what comes of the wicked, that choose the way of the evil man, they shall be cut off, not only from heaven hereafter, and all hopes of that, but from the earth now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure. They think to take root in it, but they and their families shall be rooted out of it, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming, which shall leave them neither root nor branch, *Mal. iv. 1.* Let that wisdom then enter into our hearts, and be pleasant to our souls which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

C H A P. III.

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book; both for argument to persuade us to be religious and for direction therein. 1. We must be constant to our duty, because that is the way to be happy, ver. 1—4. 2. We must live a life of dependence upon God, because that is the way to be safe, ver. 6, 7. 3. We must keep up the fear of God, because that is the way to be healthful, ver. 7, 8. 4. We must serve God with our estates, because that is the way to be rich, ver. 9, 10. 5. We must bear afflictions well, because that is the way to get good by them, ver. 11, 12. 6. We must take pains to obtain wisdom, because that is the way to gain her, and to gain by her, ver. 13—20. 7. We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason and religion, because that is the way to be always easy, ver. 21—26. 8. We must do all the good we can, and no hurt to our neighbours, because according as men are just or unjust, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty, accordingly they shall receive of God, ver. 27—35. By all which it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed and blessings.

1. MY son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; 2. For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee. 3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4. So shalt thou find favour, and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 5. ¶ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and as is here shewed will be of unpeakable advantage.

1. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts; *ver. 1.* 2. We must, 1. Fix God's law and his commandments as our rule, by which we will in every thing be ruled, and to which we will yield obedience. 2. We must acquaint ourselves with them: for we can not be said to forget that which we never knew. 3. We must remember them so as that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. 4. Our wills and affections must be subject to them, and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts must keep God's commandments; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured, *ver. 2.* that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity. 1. It is the way to be long-lived. God's commandments shall add to us length of days; to a good, useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, *length of days for ever and ever*, *Psal. xxi. 4.* God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But because length of days may possibly become a burden and a trouble, it is promised: 2. That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure; *Peace shall they be continually adding to thee.* As grace increaseth, peace shall; and of the increase of Christ's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, *there shall be no end: Great and growing peace have they that love the law.*

2. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received and retained with them, *ver. 3.* Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing; do not forfeit those, but live up to them, and preserve thine interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them: Bind them about thy neck, as the most graceful ornament. It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world, to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. Write them upon the table of thine heart, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them, and thinking them over. Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which is our duty, piety and sincerity; charity towards men, fidelity towards God: Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee.

To encourage us to do this we are assured, *ver. 4.* that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding. 1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he saith and doth, He shall be owned as one of wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as one having that good understanding which is ascribed to all them that do his commandments. 2. He wishes to have favour with men also (as Christ had, *Luke ii. 52.*) to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren, *Ephes. x. 3.* and that he shall have, they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent; shall act intelligently and with discretion. He shall have good success, so *thine* translate it; the common effect of good understanding.

3. We must have a continual regard to God's providence; must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer.

(1.) By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures and all their actions. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts, *ver. 5.* we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best and good, according to his promise to do what is best for us, if we love him and serve him. We must with an entire submission and satisfaction upon him to perform all things, for us, and not lean to our own understanding; as if we could by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves, cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which if they lean to, it will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power and goodness, and therefore must follow providence, and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

(2.) By prayer, *ver. 6.* In all thy ways acknowledge God. We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an over-ruling hand of God, ordering and disposing of us and all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful: ask his advice, and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, when we know not what to do, no thanks to have our eyes up to him, but in every case, be it never so plain. Ask success of him, as those that know *the race is not to the swift*: we must refer ourselves to him, as he from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently and with a holy indifference wait his award. In all our ways that prove direct and fair and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness: In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God, to him we must in everything make our requests known, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, *Judg. xi. 11.*

For our encouragement to do this it is promised, *he shall direct thy paths*; so as that thy way shall be safe and good, and the issue happy at last. Note, They that put themselves under a divine conduct, shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so as that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event, as that it shall be to their mind, or (which is equivalent) to their good. They that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire, shall find, though it may lead them about, it leads them the right way, and will bring them to Canaan at last.

7. ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 9. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase. 10. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. 11. ¶ My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD, neither be weary of his correction. 12. For whom the LORD loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason.

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1. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government, *ver. 7.* Fear the Lord, as your sovereign Lord and Master, be ruled in every thing by your religion, and subject to the divine will. This must be, 1. A humble subjection; *Be not wise in thine own eyes.* Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. They that have an opinion of their own sufficiency, think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to temper themselves with religion's rules. 2. A dutiful subjection; *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil*; take heed of doing any thing to offend him, and to forfeit his care. To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding, *Job xxviii. 28.* those that have it are truly wise; but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes.

For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God, it is here promised, *ver. 8.* that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food: it will be nourishing, *it shall be health to thy navel*; it will be strengthening, *it shall be marrow to thy bones.* That prudence, temperance, and sobriety, that calmness and composure of mind, that good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tends very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. A plaster to the navel is a remedy against worms in children, perhaps it was so in Solomon's time, and he may allude to it; religion kills the worms that breed in our corrupt hearts: envy is the rottenness of the bones, the sorrow of the world dries them, but hope and joy in God is marrow to them.

2. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, *ver. 9, 10.* Here is,

(1.) A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: Honour the Lord with thy substance. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him but in his honour. His honour we must shew forth, and the honour we have for him. We must honour him not only with our bodies and spirits which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his; we and all our appurtenances must be devoted to his glory; worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God, 1. With our increase. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves, *Deut. viii. 17.* and to set our hearts upon the world, *Psal. lvi. 10.* but the more God gives us, the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products, to keep us in constant dependence on God. 2. With all our increase; as God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*, but none *de non decimandi*. 3. With the first-fruits of all, as *Abel, Gen. iv. 4.* This was the law, *Exod. xxiii. 19.* and the prophets, *Mal. iii. 10.* God that is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing; his right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion; use them, and the interest we have by them, for the promoting of religion; do good to the poor with what we have, and abound in all works of piety and charity, *desiring liberal things.*

(2.) A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God, with our estates; it is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving; *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.* He doth not say thy bags, but thy barns; not thy wardrobe replenish'd, but thy presses; God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for shew or ornament: for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up: They that do good with what they have, shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs: *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is*, and the most of the comfort of it. We mistake, if we think that giving will undo us, and make us poor; no, giving for God's honour will make us rich, *Hag. ii. 19.* What we gave we have.

3. We must carry ourselves aright under our afflictions, *ver. 11, 12.* This the apostle quotes, *Heb. xii. 5.* and calls it an exhortation, which speaketh unto us as unto children, with the authority and affection of a father, We are here in a world of trouble. Now observe,

(1.) What must be our care when we are in affliction; we must neither despise it, nor be weary of it. His exhortation before was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. 1. We must not despise an affliction, be it never so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of; or as if it were not sent of an errand, and therefore required no answer. We must not be flocks and stones, and Stoicks under our afflictions; insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. 2. We must not be weary of an affliction, be it never so heavy and long, not faint under it, so the apostle renders it; not to be dispirited, dispossessed of our own soul, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect mean, for our relief, and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presseth harder, or continues longer than is meet; nor conclude deliverance will never come, because it doth not come so soon as we expect it.

(2.) What will be our comfort when we are in affliction. 1. That it is a divine correction; it is the chastening of the Lord; which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it, for it is folly to contend with a God of uncontrollable sovereignty, and irresistible power, so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure a God of unspotted purity doth us no wrong, and a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him: it is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need, and what we can bear. 2. That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a judge, but his wise affection as a father. The father correcteth the son whom he loveth, nay, and because he loves him, and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*, *Rev. iii. 19.* This is a great comfort to God's children under their afflictions, (1.) That they not only consist with, but flow from covenant love. (2.) That they are so far from doing them any real hurt, that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good and are happy means of their sanctification.

13. ¶ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. 14. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire,

are not to be compared unto her. 16. Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honour. 17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. 19. The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. 20. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom, chap. ii. 1, &c. and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What we shall get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shews us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*, that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

1. What it is to *find wisdom*, so as to be made happy by it. (1.) We must get it; he is the happy man that having found it makes it his own, gets both an interest in it and the possession of it; that *draws out understanding*; so the word is, *i. e. 1.* That derives it from God; having it not in his self, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, *who gives liberally*. 2. That takes pains for it, as he doth that draws ore out of the mine; if it doth not come easily, we must put the more strength to draw it. 3. That improves in it; that having some understanding, draws it out by growing in knowledge, and making five talents ten. 4. That doth good with it; that draws out from the stock he hath, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others for their instruction, *things new and old*. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

(2.) We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom: which intimates, 1. That we must make it our business, and not a by-business; as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise. 2. That we must venture all in it as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price, which when we have found, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, *Math. xiii. 45, 46. Buy the truth*, Prov. xxiii. 23. he doth not say at what rate, because we must buy at any rate, rather than miss it.

(3.) We must lay hold on it, as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered us, which we do the more carefully, if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it; lay hold of all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

(4.) We must retain it; it is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must *sustain it*, so we read it; we must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion in the places where we live.

2. What the happiness of those is that do find it.

1. It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had never so much of it, *ver. 14, 15*. It is not only a fairer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, and gold and rubies; suppose a man to have got these in abundance; nay, to have all the things he can desire of this world (and who is it that ever had that?) (1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom, no, it would *utterly be condemned*; it *cannot be gotten for gold*, Job xxviii. 15, &c. (2.) All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom, nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly. (3.) All this will not make a man half so happy, no not in this world, as they are that have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. (4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies will not be the purchase of.

2. It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to all those things which are supposed to make men happy, *ver. 16, 17*. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and bountiful queen, reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government.

(1.) Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable, life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand; religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, intitles us to the promises of it, and, though our days on earth should be no more than our neighbours, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world.

(2.) Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reacheth out with her left hand. For as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world, as far as infinite wisdom sees good for them, however the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them: nor is there any honour by birth or preferment comparable to that which attends religion, that makes the *righteous more excellent than his neighbour*, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to *shine forth as the sun*.

(3.) Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so, and it is certain true mery bath in it the greatest true pleasure. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*, *i. e.* the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end, we must walk in fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way, it is smooth and clean, and strewed with roses. *All her paths are peace*. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances and duties of it: one doth not imbitter what the other sweetens, as it is with the allays of this world, but they are all peace, not only sweet but safe; the saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise, *ver. 18*. *She is a tree of life*. True grace is that to the soul, which the *tree of life* would have been, from which our first parents were shut out, for eating of the forbidden tree; it is a seed of immortality, a *well of living waters, springing up to life eternal*. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the *tree of life*, Rev. xxii. 2.—ii. 7. They that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom, shall not only be healed by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death, they shall *eat and live for ever*.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, *ver. 19, 20*. This should make us in love with wisdom and understanding, that which God gives, that *the Lord by wisdom founded the earth*, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted: *by understanding, he hath likewise established the heavens*, and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them; numerous, yet no disorder in them; the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence comes the waters beneath the firmament, and the clouds drop down the dews, the waters from above the firmament; all this by the divine wisdom and knowledge: therefore *happy is the man that findeth wisdom*, for he will thereby be *thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*. Christ is that wisdom, by whom the worlds were made, and still consist; happy therefore are they to whom he is *made of God's wisdom*, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, is his.

21. ¶ My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep found wisdom and discretion. 22. So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. 23. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. 24. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. 25. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. 26. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Solomon having pronounced them happy, that not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

1. The exhortation is to have religion's rules always in view, and a'ways at heart, *ver. 21*. 1. To have them always in view. *My son, let them not depart from mine eyes*, *i. e.* Let not thine eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough, and it is time now to lay them by, but as long as thou livest, keep up and cultivate thine acquaintance with them. He that learns to write, must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must they in like manner have a constant respect, that will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must *keep found wisdom and discretion*, keep to the principles of it, and keep in the ways of it: It is wealth that is worth keeping.

2. The argument to enforce this exhortation, is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom thus kept, will be of to us.

(1.) In respect of strength and satisfaction; it will be *life to thy soul*; *ver. 22*, it will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss, it will revive thee under thy troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, and earnest of life eternal; life to the soul is life indeed.

(2.) In respect of honour and reputation; it shall be *grace to thy neck*, as a chain of gold or a jewel. *Grace to thy jaws*, so the word is; grateful to thy *taste and relish*, so some; it shall infuse grace into all thou sayest, so others; shall furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit.

(3.) In respect of safety and security; this he insists upon in four verses, the scope of which is to shew that *the effect of righteousness*, (which is the same with wisdom here) is *quietness and assurance for ever*, Isa. xxxii. 17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and therein they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe, and may be easy.

1. In their motions by day, *ver. 23*. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy; *Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely*; the natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, under the protection of his grace, so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in the safe way, as far as may be from temptation; and will enable us to walk in it with a holy security; the way of duty is the way of safety. We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that *thy foot shall not stumble* at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over.

2. In their rest by night, *ver. 24*. In our retirements we lie exposed, and are most subject to frights, but keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then *when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid* of fire, of thieves, or spectres, or any of the terrors of darkness, knowing that when we and all our friends are asleep, yet he that keepeth Israel and every true-born Israelite, neither slumbers nor sleeps; and to him thou hast committed thyself, and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. *Thou shalt lie down*, and not need to sit up to keep guard; having lain down, thou shalt sleep, and not have thine eyes held waking by care and fear: and *thy sleep shall be sweet* and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within, *Psal. iv. 8—cxvi. 7*. The way to have a good night, is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wife and godly man, is sweet.

3. In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, *ver. 25*. The harms that surprise us without thought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wife and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm never so sudden. Let him not fear the *desolation of the wicked when it comes*, *i. e. 1.* The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious; though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it; for though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his people's corrections yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. Or rather, 2. The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his, and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for, *ver. 26*. *The Lord shall be not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but thy confidence to keep thee secure*, so that *thy foot shall not be taken* by thine enemies, nor ensnared by thine own fears. God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

27. ¶ With-

27. ¶ Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. 28. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. 29. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. 30. ¶ Strive not with a man without cause, if he hath done thee no harm. 31. ¶ Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. 32. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous. 33. ¶ The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he bleisseth the habitation of the just. 34. Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly. 35. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God; in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom, which relate to our neighbour.

1. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it, *ver. 27, 28.* *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due* (either for want of love to them, or through too much love to thy money) when it is in the power of thine hand to do it, for if it be not, it cannot be expected; but it was thy great fault, if thou didst by thy extravagancies disable thyself to do justly and shew mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy grief, if God has disabled thee; not so much that thou art straitened in thine own comforts and conveniences, as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due. *Withhold it not*; this implies that it is called for and expected, but the hand is drawn in, and the *bowels of compassion shut up*. We must not hinder others from doing it, nor be ourselves backward to it. If thou hast it by thee to-day, hast it in the power of thine hand, say not to thy neighbour, *Go thy way for this time*, and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; *to-morrow I will give*; whereas thou art not sure thou shalt live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow thou shalt have it by thee; be not thus loth to part with thy money upon a good account; make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done; nor delight to keep thy neighbour in pain and in suspense; nor to shew the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a principle of confidence towards God, give good to those to whom it is due; to the lords and owners of it, so the word is, to those who upon any account are intitled to it. This requires us, (1.) To pay our just debts without fraud, covin, or delay. (2.) To give wages to those that have earned it. (3.) To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence on us, for to them it is due. (4.) To render dues both to the church and state, magistrates and ministers. (5.) To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in every thing to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due to the law of doing as we would be done by. (6.) To be charitable to the poor and necessitous; if others want the necessary supports of life, and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them, and not withhold it; alms are called righteousnesses, because they are a debt to the poor; and a debt which we must not defer to pay. *Bis dat, qui cito dat.*

2. We must never design any hurt or harm to any body, *ver. 29.* *Devise not evil against thy neighbour*; do not contrive how to do him an ill turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good name; and the rather because he dwells securely by thee, and having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard. It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill turn, and give him no warning; *Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.* It is a most base, ungrateful thing, if our neighbours have a good opinion of us that we will do them no harm, and we from thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.

3. We must not be quarrelsome and litigious, *ver. 30.* *Do not strive with a man without cause*; contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation, which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee, or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way: law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. When accounts are balanced it will be found there is little got by striving.

4. We must not envy the prosperity of evil doers, *ver. 31.* This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, *Psal. xxxvii.* *Envy not the oppressor*, though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. *Choose none of his ways*, do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he doth, though thou were sure to get by it all that he hath, for it would be dear bought.

Now to shew what little reason sinners have to envy sinners, Solomon here, in the four last verses of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together (as his father David had done; *Psal. xxxvii.*) sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be oppressed, and how miserable the wicked are, though they be oppressors. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judgeth of them, not as they stand in the world's books; those are in the right that are of God's mind; and if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, saints are so happy themselves that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be never so prosperous. For,

(1.) Sinners are hated of God, but saints are loved, *ver. 32.* The froward sinners, that are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, they are *abomination to the Lord*; he that hateth nothing that he hath made yet abhors those, who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination; the righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites; he hath that communion with them which is a secret to the world, and in which they have a joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love: his covenant is with them, they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence, better than others can. *Shall I hide from Abraham, the things that I do?*

(2.) Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, *ver. 33.* The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling, perhaps, but the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is *in it*, and though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are cursed, *Mal. ii. 2.* There is *leanness in the soul*,

when the body is fed to the full, *Psal. cxi. 13.* The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a festering leprosy, it will consume the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, *Zech. x. 3.* *Hab. ii. 11.* The just have a habitation, a poor cottage, the word is used for the peopled one, a very mean dwelling, but God bleisseth it, he is continually blessing it from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house, according as the inhabitants are wicked or godly, and it is certain a blessed family, though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich.

(3.) God puts contempt upon sinners, but shews respect unto saints, *ver. 34.* 1. Those that *exalt themselves shall certainly be abased*; surely he scorneth the scorners. Those that scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, that scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world; he despiseth their impotent malice, *sits in heaven and laughs at them*, *Psal. ii. 4.* He retaliates upon them, *Psal. xlvii. 26.* *Rebukes the proud.* 2. Those that *humble themselves shall be exalted*, for he *giveth grace to the lowly*, he works that in them, which puts honour upon them, and for which they are accepted of God, and approved of men. Those that patiently bear contempt from scornful men, shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorners, or to choose their ways.

(4.) The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, *ver. 35.* 1. Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; they shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure; God gives them grace, *ver. 34.* and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, *2 Cor. iii. 18.* It is glory begun, the earnest of it, *Psal. lxxxix. 11.* 2. Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took the way to be great: Their end will manifest their folly, *Shame shall be their promotion*: And it will be so much the more their punishment, that it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

C H A P. IV.

When the things of God are to be taught, precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, not only because the things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because man's mind at the least are unfit to admit them, and commonly prejudiced against them; and therefore Solomon, in this chapter, with a great variety of expression, and a pleasant, powerful flood of divine eloquence, inculcates the same things he had expressed unto us in the foregoing chapters. Here is, (1.) An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, that is, of true religion and godliness, borrowed from the good instructions which his father gave him, and enforced with many considerable arguments, *ver. 1-13.* (2.) A necessary caution against bad company and all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, *ver. 14-19.* (3.) Particular directions for the attaining and preserving of wisdom, and bringing forth the fruits of it, *ver. 20-27.* So plainly, so powerfully is the case laid before us, that we shall be ever inexcusable if we perish in our folly.

1. **H**EAR, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. 2. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. 3. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. 4. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. 5. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. 9. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. 10. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings: and the years of thy life shall be many. 11. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths. 12. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. 13. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life.

Here is, 1. The invitation which Solomon gives to his children to come and receive instruction from him, *ver. 1, 2.* *Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father.* That is, (1.) Let my own children, in the first place, receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also. Note, Magistrates and Ministers that are intrusted with the conduct of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instruction of their own families; from which their public work will by no means excuse them. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there, for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and doth not take pains in their good education, how shall he do his duty as he ought to the church of God, *1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.* And the children that are eminent for wisdom and public usefulness, ought to improve in knowledge and grace, in proportion to the advantages they have by their relation to such parents. Yet it may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents, whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam the son of Solomon was far from being either one of the wisest or one of the best; we have reason to think that thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated. (2.) Let all young people in the days of their childhood and youth take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He doth not say, My children, but, Ye children;

we read but of one son that Solomon had of his own, but would you think it? He is willing to set up for a schoolmaster, and to teach other people's children; for in that age there is most hopes of success: the branch is easily bended when it is young and tender. (3.) Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons, let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper: let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident; and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the father of our spirits, to whom we ought to be in subjection that we may live. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers that love us, and seek our welfare; and therefore though the instruction carry in it reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, yet we must bid it welcome.

Now, (1.) To recommend it to us, we are told not only that it is the instruction of a father, but that it is *understanding*, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures; religion hath reason on its side, and we are taught it by fair reasoning. It is a law indeed, ver. 2. but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon good doctrine, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptance. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law.

(2.) To rivet it in us we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, attend to know it, for otherwise we cannot do it, and not to forsake it by disowning the doctrine or disobeying the law.

2. The instructions he gives them. Observe,

(1.) How he came by these instructions; he had them from his parents, and teacheth his children the same that they taught him, ver. 3, 4. Observe, 1. His parents loved him, and therefore taught him. *I was my father's son.* David had many sons, but Solomon was his son indeed, as Isaac is called, Gen. xvii. 19. And for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling, above any of his children. Because God had a special kindness for Solomon (the prophet called him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2 Sam. xii. 25) and for that reason David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If parents may ever love one child better than another, it must not be till it plainly appears that God doth so. He was tender and only beloved in the sight of his mother: sure there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction, when both the parents made it. Now we see how they shewed their love, they catechised him, kept him to his book, and held him to strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir-apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large; nay, therefore they tutored him thus. And perhaps David was the more strict with Solomon in his education, because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not crossed in any thing, 1 Kings i. 6. as also in Absalom. 2. What his parents taught him, he teacheth others. Observe, (1.) When Solomon was grown up, he not only remembered but took a pleasure in repeating the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them, nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things which when he became a man, a king, he should put away, as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them, as some wicked children have done, to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he was got clear from grave lessons and restraints. (2.) Though Solomon was a wise man himself, and divinely inspired, yet when he was to teach wisdom, he did not think it below him to quote his father, and to make use of his words. They that would learn well, and teach well in religion, must not affect new-found notions and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors; if we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? Jer. vi. 16. (3.) Solomon having been well educated by his parents, thought himself thereby obliged to give his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him; and this is one way in which we must requite our parents for the pains they took with us, even by shewing piety at home, 1 Tim. v. 4. They taught us not only that we may learn ourselves, but that we might teach our children the good knowledge of God, Psal. lxxviii. 6. And we are false to a trust if we do not; for the sacred depositum of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands, with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, 2 Tim. ii. 2. (4.) Solomon enforceth his exhortations, with the authority of his father David, a man famous in his generation upon all accounts: Be it taken notice of to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but the propagating of it to others; and we should therefore continue in the things which we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them, 2 Tim. iii. 14.

(2.) What those instructions were, ver. 4—13.

(1.) By way of precept and exhortation. David in teaching his son, though he was a child of great capacity and quick apprehension, yet to shew that he was in good earnest, and to affect his child the more with what he said expressed himself with great warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught, Deut. vi. 7. *Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children.* David, though he was a man of public business, and had tutors for his son, yet took all this pains with him himself.

1. He recommends to him his bible and his catechism, as the means, his father's words, ver. 4. the words of his mouth, ver. 5. his sayings, ver. 10. all the good lessons he had taught him; and, perhaps, he means particularly the book of Psalms, many of which were *Maschils*, psalms of instruction, and two of them are expressly said to be for Solomon. These and all his other words Solomon must have an eye to. (1.) He must hear and receive them, ver. 10. diligently attend to them, and imbibe them, as the earth drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, Heb. vi. 7. God thus bespeaks our attention: to his words, *Hear, O my son and receive my sayings.*

(2.) He must hold fast the form of sound words; which his father gave him, ver. 4. *Let thine heart retain my words*, and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained. (3.) He must govern himself by them. *Keep thy commandments*, i. e. obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, John vii. 17. (4.) He must stick to them and abide by them, *decline not from the words of my mouth*, ver. 5. as fearing they will be too great a check upon thee, but *take fast hold of instruction*, ver. 13. as being resolved to keep thy hold, and never let it go. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and if it do not, their case is very sad.

2. He recommends to him wisdom, understanding, as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means; that wisdom which is the principal wisdom, get that: *Quod caput est sapientia eam acquirit sapientiam.* J. T. i. e. be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which he had said before is the top branch of it, and that is the fear of God, chap. i. 7. A principle of religion in the heart, this is the one thing needful: therefore,

1. Get this wisdom, get this understanding, ver. 5. And again, *Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding*, ver. 7. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it, wait at wisdom's gate, Prov. viii. 34. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies, get possession of wise principles, and the habits of wisdom; get it by experience, get it above all thy getting, be more in care, and take more pains to get this than to get the wealth of this world; whatever thou forgettest, get this; reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly. True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it; yet, after all, we must not say, *Our might and the power of our hand has gotten us this wealth.*

2. Forget her not; ver. 5. forsake her not, ver. 6. let her not go, ver. 13. but keep her. Those that have got this wisdom must need take heed of losing it again by returning to folly: it is indeed a good part that shall not be taken from us; but then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as those do that forget it first, and let it slip out of their minds, and then forsake it and turn out of its good ways. That good thing that is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop through carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, or suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel.

3. Love her, ver. 6. and embrace her, ver. 8. as worldly men love their wealth, and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than any thing in this world: and if we cannot reach to be great masters of wisdom, yet let us be true lovers of it; and what grace we have let us embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that admire its beauty.

4. Exalt her, ver. 8. always keep up high thoughts of Religion, speak of it with value and veneration, and do all thou canst to bring it into reputation, and maintain the credit of it among men; concur with God in his purpose, which is to magnify the law and make it honourable, and do what thou canst to serve that purpose. Let wisdom's children not only justify her, but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and regarding a poor wise man, we exalt wisdom.

(2.) By way of motive and inducement, thus to labour for wisdom, and submit to the conduct of it, consider,

1. It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief and continual care of every man in this life, ver. 7. *Wisdom is the principal thing*; other things which we are solicitous to get and keep are nothing to it: it is the whole of man, Eccles. xii. 13. It is that which recommends us to our God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last, and therefore it is the principal thing.

It hath reason and equity on its side, ver. 11. *I have taught thee in the way of wisdom*, true wisdom, and so it will be found to be at last; *I have led thee*, not in the crooked ways of carnal policy, which doth wrong under colour of wisdom, but in right paths, agreeable to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The rectitude of the divine nature appears in the rectitude of all the divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example, and by applying general instructions to particular cases; so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise.

3. It would be much for his own advantage: If thou be wise and good, thou shalt be so for thyself.

(1.) It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness, it is what thou canst not live without. *Keep my commandments and live*, ver. 4. That of our Saviour agrees with this, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*, Matt. xi. 17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious: Receive wisdom's sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many, ver. 10. as many in this world as infinite wisdom sees fit, and in the other world thou shalt live that life the years of which shall never be numbered. *Keep her* therefore whatever it cost thee, for she is thy life, ver. 13. All thy satisfaction will be found in this; and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul.

(2.) It will be thy guard and guide, thy convoy and conduct, through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey, through this wilderness. Love wisdom and cleave to her, and she shall preserve thee, shall keep thee, ver. 6. from sin the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; shall keep thee from hurting thyself, and then none else can hurt thee. As we say, *Keep thy shop*, and thy shop will keep thee; so keep thy wisdom, and thy wisdom will keep thee. It will keep us from straits and stumbling-blocks in the management of ourselves and our affairs, ver. 12. 1. That our steps be not straitened when we go, i. e. bring ourselves into such straits as David was in, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. They that make God's words their rule, shall walk at liberty, and be at ease themselves. 2. That our feet do not stumble when we run. Wise and good men, if they be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word which they go by, will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

(3.) It will be thy honour and reputation, ver. 8. *Exalt wisdom*, do thou but shew thy good-will to her advancement, and though she needs not thy service, she will abundantly recompense it, *she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour*. Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour than his crown or purple; that was it for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and no doubt in his reign, and David's, wise and good men stood fairest for preferment. However, religion will first or last bring all those to honour that cordially embrace her: they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on, ver. 9. *She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace* in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man, and in the other world a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee; a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither. That is the true honour which attends religion, *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*. David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that when God bid him ask what he would, he prayed, *Lord, give me a wife and understanding heart*. We should make it appear by our prayers how well we were taught.

14. ¶ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away. 16. For they sleep not except they have done mischief: and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall. 17. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. 18. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19. The way of the wicked is as darkness: They know not at what they stumble.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began, *ver. 4.* to continue to the end of this chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again if not sooner. In these verses, having exhorted us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the path of the wicked: 1. We must take heed of the ways of sin, and avoid them; every thing that looks like sin, and leads to it. 2. In order to this, we must keep out of the ways of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company.

Here is, (1.) The caution itself, *ver. 14, 15.*

1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners. *Enter not into the paths of the wicked.* Our teacher having like a faithful guide shewed us the right paths, *ver. 11.* he warns us of the by-paths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated, and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; do not so much as enter into it; no not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment, and difficult to retreat with safety. Venture not into the company of those that are infected with the plague, no not though thou think thyself guarded with an antidote.

2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way we must hasten out of it. If, ere thou wast aware, thou didst enter in at the gate, because it was wide, yet go not on in the way of the evil men. As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not a step more, stay not a minute longer, in the way that certainly leads to destruction.

3. We must dread and detest the way of sin and sinners, and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. *The way of evil men* may seem a pleasant way and sociable, and the next way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view; but it is an ill way, and will end ill, and therefore if thou love thy God and thy soul, avoid it, pass not by it, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and if thou find thyself near it, turn from it, and pass away, and get as far off as thou canst. The manner of expression, intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it; and that our watchmen are, or should be in good earnest in giving us warning. It intimates likewise, at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he doth not say, Keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the farther the better; never think you can get far enough from it; *escape for thy life, look not behind thee.*

(2.) The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. Consider this character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun; they are mischievous men, *ver. 16, 17.* they not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief sake. They are continually designing and endeavouring to cause some to fall, to ruin them body and soul. Wickedness and malice are in their nature, and violence in all their actions: They are spiteful in the highest degree; for, 1. Mischief is rest and sleep to them. As much satisfaction as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified; as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant, as long as Mordecai was unchanged. It intimates likewise, how restless and unwearied they are in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather want sleep than want the pleasure of being vexatious. 2. Mischief is meat and drink to them, they feed and feast upon it; *they eat the bread of wickedness (they eat up my people as they eat bread,)* Psalm xiv. 4. and drink the wine of violence; *drink iniquity like water,* Job xv. 16. All they eat and drink is got by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt; Let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good; *Amici diem perdidit;* and let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of such; for, (1.) It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater reproach to human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience, that has more of the devil's image in it, nor is more serviceable to his interests, than a delight to do mischief, and to vex, and hurt, and ruin every body. (2.) It is very dangerous. Shun those that delight to do mischief, as thou tenderest thine own safety; for whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them, *chap. i. 18.* and they will ruin thee if thou dost not.

2. Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art invited to walk in.

(1.) The way of righteousness is light, *ver. 18.* *The path of the just, which they have chosen, and in which they walk, is as light; the light shines on their ways,* Job xxii. 28. and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is their way, and he is the light. They are guided by the word of God, and that is a light to their feet; they themselves are light in the Lord, and they walk in the light as he is in the light. 1. It is a shining light: Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it: it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; *shines before men, who see their good works,* Matt. v. 16. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that walk in the light. It is as the morning light, which shines out of obscurity, Isa. lviii. 8, 10. and puts an end to the works of darkness. It is a growing light: it shines more and more; not like the light of a meteor, which soon disappears; or that of a candle, which burns dim, and burns down; but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining: Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger: the joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. 3. It will arrive in the end at the perfect day. The light of the day-spring will at length be noon day light, and that is it which the enlightened soul is pressing towards. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, Matt. xiii. 43. Their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore it is our wisdom to keep close to the path of the just.

(2.) The way of sin is as darkness, *ver. 19.* The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with, are works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can they have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in doing mischief? What sure guide have they that cast God's word behind them? *The way of the wicked is dark,* and therefore dangerous; for they stumble, and yet know not at what they stumble; they fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never inquire wherefore God contends with them: they consider not that they do evil, nor what will be the end of it, *Psalms lxxii. 5. Job xviii. 5, 6.* This is the way we are bid to shun.

20. ¶ My son, attend to my words, incline thine ears unto my sayings. 21. Let them not depart
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from thine eyes: keep them in the midst of thine heart. 22. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23. ¶ Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life. 24. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Solomon having warned us not to do evil, here teacheth us how to do well: It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty.

1. We must have a continual regard to the word of God, and endeavour that it may always be ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, 1. We must receive them readily; *incline thine ear to them,* *ver. 20.* humbly bow to them, diligently listen to them. The attentive hearing of the word of God, is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped those are resolved to do their duty, that are inclined to know it. 2. We must retain them carefully, *ver. 21.* we must lay them before us as our rule; *Let them not depart from thine eyes;* view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them. We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man; *keep them in the midst of thine heart,* as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing; let the word of God be written in thine heart, and that which is written there will remain.

And the reason why we must thus make much use of the words of wisdom, is because they will be both food and physic to us, like the tree of life, *Rev. xxii. 2. Ezek. xlvii. 12.* They that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find them, 1. Food. *For they are life unto those that find them,* *ver. 22.* As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained; we could not live without it, we may by faith live upon it. 2. Physic. They are health to all their flesh, i. e. to the whole man both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are health to all flesh, so the Seventy. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this diseased world. They are a medicine to all their flesh, so the word is; i. e. to all their corruptions, for they are called flesh; to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh; There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

2. We must keep a watchful eye, and a strict hand, upon all the motions of our inward man, *ver. 23.* Here is, 1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom: *Keep thy heart with all diligence.* God that gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them; Man, woman, keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit, *Deut. iv. 9.* We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard accordingly upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt, and getting hurt; from being defiled by sin, and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep conscience void of offence: Keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects, and in due bounds. Keep them with all keepings, so the word is; there are many ways of keeping things, by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, *Jer. xvii. 9.* Or, above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes, *John iii. 1.* keep our tongues, *Psalms xxxiv. 13.* keep our feet, *Eccles. v. 1.* but above all keep our hearts. 2. A good reason given for this care; because out of it are the issues of life, i. e. out of a heart well kept, will flow living issues, good products to the glory of God and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

3. We must set a watch before the door of our lips that we offend not with our tongue, *ver. 24.* put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must receive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness and foolish talking, all which come from a froward mouth, and perverse lips, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both; and which are as unsightly and ill-favoured before God, as a crooked distorted mouth drawn awry is before men. All manner of tongue-sins we must, by constant watchfulness and steadfast resolution put from us, put far from us; abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil, and fearing to learn any such words.

4. We must make a covenant with our eyes; let them look right on, and straight before thee, *ver. 25.* let the eye be fixed and not wandering, let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good, and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thine eye be single and not divided; let thine intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not askint at any by-end. We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high calling, and direct all towards that. *Oculum in metam.*

5. We must act considerately in all we do, *ver. 26.* ponder the paths of thy feet: weigh it, so the word is; put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord, and whether it will end well. We must consider our past ways, and examine what we have done; and our present ways, what we are doing, whither are we going. See that ye walk circumspectly. It concerns us to consider, what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages; and what the dangers of our way, that we may act accordingly. Do nothing rashly.

6. We must act with steadiness, and caution, and consistency. Let all thy ways be established, *ver. 26.* and be not unstable in them, as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point if he prevail to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to remove thy foot from evil, i. e. take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil, and let thine eyes look right on, that thou mayest keep the golden mean. Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful.

C H A P. V.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of chap. ii. To write the same things in other words ought not to be grievous, for it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. Here is, (1.) An exhortation to get acquaintance with, and submit to the laws of wisdom in general, ver. 2. (2.) A particular caution against the sin of whoredom, ver. 3—14. (3.) Remedies prescribed against that sin. 1. Conjugal love, ver. 15—20. 2. A regard to God's omniscience, ver. 21. 3. A dread of the miserable end of wicked people, ver. 22, 23. And all little enough to arm young people against these fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

1. **M**Y son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding. 2. That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. 3. ¶ For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil. 4. But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5. Her feet go down to death: her steps take hold on hell. 6. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them. 7. Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. 8. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: 9. Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel. 10. Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labours be in the house of a stranger. 11. And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed. 12. And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? 13. And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me? 14. I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

Here we have,

1. A solemn preface to introduce the caution which follows, ver. 1, 2. Solomon here addresseth himself to his son, that is, to all young men, as unto his children, whom he has an affection for, and some influence upon. In God's name he demands attention, for he writes by divine inspiration, and is a prophet, though he begins not with, *Thus saith the Lord. Attend and bow thine ear*; not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it, and consider it diligently. To gain attention he urgeth, 1. The excellency of his discourse; it is *my wisdom*, it is *my understanding*; if I undertake to teach thee wisdom, I cannot prescribe any thing to be more properly called so; moral philosophy is my philosophy, and that which is to be learnt in my school. 2. The usefulness of it; attend to what I say, (1.) That thou mayest act wisely; that thou mayest regard discretion: Solomon's lectures are not designed to fill our heads with notions, with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation, but to guide us in the government of ourselves, that we may act prudently, so as becomes us, and so as will be for our true interest. (2.) That thou mayest speak wisely; that thy lips may keep knowledge, and thou mayest have it ready at thy tongue's end (as we say) for the benefit of those with whom thou dost converse. The priest's lips are said to keep knowledge, Mal. ii. 7. but they that are ready and mighty in the scriptures, may not only in their devotions, but in their discourses, be spiritual priests.

2. The caution itself, and that is to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulterous woman here understand idolatry, false doctrine, which tends to debauch men's minds and manners; or the sensual appetite, to which it may as fitly be applied: but the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against the seventh commandment sins, which youth is so prone to, temptations to which are so violent, examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, are so destructive to all the seeds of virtue, in the soul, that it is not strange Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing, and so often repeated.

Solomon here as a faithful watchman gives fair warning to all, as they tender their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for it will certainly be their ruin. Two things we are here warned to take heed of.

1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin. It is true, the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, ver. 3. the pleasures of fleshly lusts are very tempting, like the wine that gives its colour in the cup, and moves itself aright; its mouth, the kisses of its mouth, the words of its mouth are smoother than oil, that the poisonous pill may go down-glib, and there may be no suspicion of harm in it.

But consider, (1.) How fatal the consequences will be: What fruit will the sinner have of his honey and oil, when the end will be; 1. The terrors of conscience, it is bitter as wormwood, ver. 4. what was luscious in the mouth rises in the stomach, and fairs there; it cuts in the reflection like a two-edged sword; take it which way you will it wounds; Solomon could speak by experience, Eccles. vii. 26. 2. The torments of hell. If some that have been guilty of this sin have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of the sin is to destruction of body and soul; the feet of it go down to death, nay, they take hold on hell, to pull it to the sinner, as if the damnation slumbered too long, ver. 5. Those that are entangled in this sin there is but a step between them and hell, and they are ready to drop into it.

(2.) Consider how false the charms are. The adulteress flatters and speaks fair, her words are honey and oil, but she will deceive those that hearken to her; her ways are moveable that thou canst not know them, she often changeth her disguise, and puts on a great variety of false colours, because if she be rightly known, she is certainly hated. Proteus-like she puts on many shapes, that she may keep in with those whom she has a design upon: And what doth she aim at with all this art and management? nothing but to keep them from pondering the path of life, for she knows if they once come to do that she shall certainly lose them. Those are ignorant of Satan's devices, who do not understand that the great thing he drives at in all his temptations, is, 1. To keep them from choosing the path of life, to prevent them from being religious, and from going to heaven; that being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. 2. In order hereunto, to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how reasonable it is that they should walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will but allow themselves

the liberty of a serious thought, and will weigh things impartially in an even balance; and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests, but by diverting them with continual amusements of one kind or other from the calm and sober consideration of the things that belong to their peace. And uncleanness is a sin that doth as much as any thing blind the understanding, fear the conscience, and keep people from pondering the path of life. Whoredom takes away the heart, Hos. iv. 11.

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, ver. 7, 8. This caution is introduced with a solemn preface, *Hear me now therefore, O ye children*, whoever ye are, that read or hear these lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it, treasure it up, and depart not from the words of my mouth, as those will do that hearken to the words of the strange woman. Do not only receive what I say for the present, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee, when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation. The caution itself is very pressing, *remove thy way far from her*: if thy way should happen to lie near her, and thou shouldest have a fair pretence of being led by business within the reach of her charms, yet change thy way and alter the course of it, rather than expose thyself to danger; come not nigh the door of her house; go on the other side of the street, nay, go through some other street though it be about. This intimates, (1.) That we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin; we must fear it as we would a place infected with the plague; we must loathe it as stinking carrion, that we will not come within the smell of. Then we are likely to preserve our purity, when we conceive a rooted antipathy to all fleshly lusts. (2.) That we ought industriously to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin, or a step towards it. They that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Such tinder there is in the corrupt nature, that it is madness, upon any pretence whatsoever, to come near the sparks. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mocked God when we prayed, *Lead us not into temptation*. (3.) That we ought to be jealous over ourselves, with a godly jealousy, and not to be so confident of the strength of our own resolutions, as to venture upon the brink of sin with a promise to ourselves, that *hitherto we will come, and no further*. (4.) That whatever is become a snare to us, and an occasion of sin, though it be as a right eye and a right hand, we must pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from us, must part with that which is dearest to us, rather than hazard our own souls; this is our Saviour's command, *Matth. v. 28, 29, 30*.

The arguments which Solomon here useth to enforce this caution, are taken from the same topic with those before, the many mischiefs which attend this sin.

(1.) It blasts the reputation; thou wilt give thine honour unto others, ver. 9. i. e. thou wilt lose it thyself, thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all, with good reason, cry shame on thee, will despise thee, and trample on thee as a foolish man. Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with harlots.

(2.) It wastes the time, gives the years, the years of youth, the flower of men's time unto the cruel, that base lust of thine, which with the utmost cruelty wars against the soul: that base harlot that pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for thy precious life. Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God, are spent in the service of a cruel sin.

(3.) It ruins the estate, ver. 20. Strangers will be filled with thy wealth, which thou art but entrusted with as a steward for thy family; and the fruit of thy labours, which should be provision for thine own house, will be in the house of a stranger, that neither has right to it, nor will ever thank thee for it.

(4.) It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days; thy flesh and thy body will be consumed by it, ver. 11. The lusts of uncleanness not only war against the soul, which the sinner neglects, and is no care about; but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of, and is in such care to please and pamper: such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness, waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and many times have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months are cut off in the midst, and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust.

(5.) It will fill the mind with horror if ever conscience be awakened. Though thou art merry now, supporting thyself in thine own deceivings, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, ver. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours; sooner or later it will have sorrow; either when the soul is humbled and brought to repentance, or when the flesh and body are consumed; either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave, when the body is rotting there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and, *son, remember*, is the constant peal.

Solomon here brings in the convinced sinner reproaching himself, and aggravating his own folly. He will then most bitterly lament it.

1. That because he hated to be reformed, he therefore hated to be informed, and could not endure either to be taught his duty; *How have I hated* not only the discipline of being instructed, but the instruction itself, though all true and good; or to be told of his faults, *my heart despised reproof*, ver. 12. He cannot but own, that those who had the charge of him, parents, ministers, had done their part, they had been his teachers, they had instructed him, had given him good counsel and fair warning, ver. 13. but, to his own shame and confusion doth he speak it, and therein justifies God in all the miseries that were brought upon him, he had not taken their counsel, had not obeyed their voice; for indeed he never inclined his ear to those that instructed him; never minded what they said, nor admitted the impressions of it. Note, Those that have had a good education, and do not live up to it, will have a great deal to answer for another day. And those who will not now remember what they were taught, to conform themselves to it, will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and consequently of their ruin.

2. That by the frequent acts of sin, the habits of it were so rooted and confirmed, that his heart was fully set in him to commit it, ver. 14. *I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly*. When he came into the synagogue, or into the courts of the temple, to worship God with other Israelites, his unclean heart was full of wanton thoughts and desires, and his eyes of adultery. The reverence of the place and company, and work that was doing, could not restrain him, but he was almost as wicked and vile there as any where. No sin will appear more frightful to an awakened conscience, than the profanation of holy things: nor will any aggravation of sin render it more exceeding sinful than the place we are honoured with in the congregation and assembly, and the advantages we enjoy thereby; Zimri and Cozbi avowed their villany in the sight of Moses, and all the congregation, Numb. xxv. 7. and hear-adultery is as open to God, and must needs be most offensive to him, when we draw nigh to him in religious exercises; *I was in all evil*, in defiance of the magistrates, and judges, and their assemblies, so some understand it. Others refer it to the

the evil of punishment, not to the evil of sin, I was made an example and spectacle to the world; I was under almost all God's sore judgments in the midst of the congregation of Israel, set up for a mark. *I stood up and cried in the congregation, Job xxv. 28.* Let that be avoided which will be thus ruled at last.

15. ¶ Drink waters out of thine own cistern; and running waters out of thine own well. 16. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. 17. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee. 18. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. 29. *Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe, let her breast satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love.* 20. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? 21. For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. 22. ¶ His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. 23. He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of this folly he shall go astray.

Solomon having shewed the great evil that there is in adultery and fornication, and all such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes remedies against them.

1. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts of lawful marriage, which was ordained for the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore ought to be made use of in time, lest it should not prove effectual for the cure of that which it might have prevented. Let none complain that God has dealt unkindly with them, in forbidding them those pleasures which they have a natural desire of, for he has graciously provided for the regular gratification of them. Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden, but choose thee out one, which thou pleasest, and of that thou mayest freely eat; nature will be content with that, but lust with nothing. And God, in thus confining men to one, has been so far from putting any hardship upon them, that he hath really consulted their true interest; for, as Mr. Herbert observes,

If God had laid all common, certainly

Man would have been the encloser.—Church-porch.

Solomon here enlargeth much upon this; not only prescribing it as an antidote, but urging it as an argument against fornication, that the allowed pleasures of marriage (however wicked wits may ridicule them, who are factors for the unclean spirit) far transcend all the false forbidden pleasures of whoredom.

(1.) Let young men marry; marry, and not burn. Have a cistern, a well of thine own, ver. 15. even the wife of thy youth, ver. 18. wholly abstain or wed.—Herb. The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thyself.

(2.) Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself hath chosen, and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence appointed for him, and he ought much more to be pleased with the divine appointment: pleased with her because she is his own; *Let thy fountain be blessed, ver. 18. i. e. think thyself very happy in her, look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, i. e. pray daily for her, and then rejoice with her.* Those comforts we are likely to have joy of, that are sanctified to us by prayer and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us, but commanded us to be pleasant with our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted, that the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, Isa. lxii. 5. but given for law, Eccl. ix. 9. *Live joyfully with thy wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life.* Those take not their comforts there where God has appointed, who are jovial and merry with their companions abroad, but sour and morose with their families at home.

(3.) Let him be fond of his wife, and love her dearly, ver. 19. *Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe,* such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business, than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thine own wife; let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe lamb did in his, 2 Sam. xii. 3. and do thou repose thy head in hers, and let that satisfy thee at all times; and seek not for pleasure in any other. *Err thou always in her love:* If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and will be dotting fond of any body, let it be only of thine own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding. This is *drinking waters* to quench the thirst of thine appetite, *out of thine own cistern, and running waters,* which are clear and sweet and wholesome, *out of thine own well,* ver. 15. 1 Cor. vii. 2, 3.

(4.) Let him take delight in his children, and look upon them with pleasure, ver. 16, 17. Look upon them as streams from thine own pure fountains (the Jews are said to *come forth out of the waters of Judah*, Isa. xlviii. 1.) so that they are pieces of thyself, as the streams are of the fountain. Keep to thine own wife, and thou shalt have, 1. A numerous offspring, like rivers of water which run in abundance, and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched in other families; whereas they that commit whoredom shall not increase, Hos. iv. 10. 2. A peculiar offspring, which shall be only thine own, whereas the children of whoredom that are fathered upon thee, it is likely are not so, but for aught thou knowest, are the offsprings of strangers, and yet thou must keep them. 3. A credible offspring which are an honour to thee, and which thou mayest send abroad and appear with in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that which thou art ashamed to own. In this matter virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it, justly therefore it is called wisdom.

(5.) Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures, when he is *always ravished with the love of a faithful virtuous wife*, let him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to be *ravished with a strange woman*, (ver. 20.) to be in love with a filthy harlot, and *embrace the bosom of a stranger*, which if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loose the thoughts of. Why wilt thou be so foolish, such an enemy to thyself as to prefer nasty puddle water, and that poisoned too and stolen, before pure living waters out of thine own well? Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed.

2. See the eye of God always upon thee, and let his fear rule in thine heart, ver. 21. They that live in this sin promise themselves secrecy; *the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight*, Job xxiv. 15. But to what purpose, when it cannot be hid from God, for, 1. He sees it, *the ways of*

man, all his motions, all his actions, are before the eyes of the Lord, all the workings of the heart, and all the out-goings of the life, that which is done never so secretly, and disguised never so artfully; God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He doth not cast an eye upon men's ways now and then, but they are always actually in his view, and under his inspection; and darest thou sin against God in his sight, and do that wickedness under his eye, which thou durst not do in the presence of a man like thyself? 2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, but *ponders all his goings*, judgeth concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for them. Every action is weighed and shall be brought into judgment, Eccles. xii. 14. which is a good reason why we should *ponder the path of our feet*, chap. iv. 26. and so judge ourselves that we may not be judged.

3. Foresee the certain ruin of those that go on still in their trespasses. They that live in this sin promise themselves impunity, but they deceive themselves, their sin will find them out, ver. 22, 23. The apostle gives the sense of these verses in a few words, Heb. xiii. 4. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

(1.) It is a sin which men hardly shake off the power of; when the sinner is old and weak, his lusts are strong and active, in calling to remembrance the days of his youth, Ezek. xxiii. 19. Thus his own iniquities having seized the wicked himself by his own consent, and he having voluntarily surrendered himself a captive to them, he is held in the cords of his own sins, and such full possession they have gained of him, that he cannot extricate himself, but in the greatness of his folly (and what greater folly could there be, than to yield himself a servant to such cruel task-masters?) he shall go astray, and wander endlessly. Uncleanness is a sin, which when once men have plunged themselves into, they very hardly and very rarely recover themselves.

(2.) It is a sin which, if it be not forsaken, men cannot possibly escape the punishment of; it will unavoidably be their ruin. As their own iniquities do arrest them in the reproaches of conscience, and present rebukes, Jer. vii. 19. so their own iniquities shall arrest them, and bind them over to the judgments, of God; there needs no prison, no chains, they shall be holden in the cords of their own sins, as the fallen angels, being incurably wicked, are thereby reserved in chains of darkness. The sinner that having been often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall die at length without instruction; he having had general warning sufficient given him already, he shall have no particular warning, but he shall die without seeing his danger beforehand, shall die because he would not receive instruction, but in the greatness of his folly, would go astray; and so shall his doom be, he shall never find his way home again. They that are so foolish as to choose the way of sin, it is just with God to leave them to themselves, to go on in it till they come to that destruction which it leads to; which is a good reason why we should guard with watchfulness and resolution against the allurements of the sensual appetite.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A caution against rash suretyship, ver. 1—5. 2. A rebuke to slothfulness, ver. 6—11. 3. The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, ver. 12—15. 4. An account of seven things which God hates, ver. 16—19. 5. An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, ver. 20—23. 6. A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom, ver. 24—35. And we are here dissuaded from sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damning in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

1. MY son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2. Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend: go humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. 4. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids. 5. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

It is the excellency of the word of God, that it teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion, and this is one good rule, to avoid suretyship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

1. We must look upon suretyship as a snare, and decline it accordingly, ver. 1, 2. It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though he were one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency; but much more to *strike the hands with a stranger*, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest. Or the stranger here, with whom the hand is stricken, is the creditor, the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, i. e. thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them, or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that thou art snared with the words of thy mouth; it was easily done with a word's speaking, it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into, but it will not be so easily got clear of, thou art in a snare, more than thou art aware of. See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind, they are often snares. 2. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed to get out of it, ver. 3, 4, 5. It sleeps for the present, we hear nothing of it, the debt is not demanded, the principal faith, Never fear, we will take care of it. But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will, and perhaps may be hasty and severe; the principal may prove either knavish or insolent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family to pay that which thou didst neither eat nor drink for. And therefore deliver thyself, rest not till either the creditor give up the bond, or the principal give the counter security; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language, that will provoke, and make bad worse; but humble thyself, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to them, and give them all the fair words thou canst, engage thy friends,

friends to speak for thee, leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thine adversary, and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through it: *Give not sleep to thine eyes, till thou hast delivered thyself.* Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of the snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve. See what care God in his word has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. *Godliness* has precepts as well as promises relating to the life that now is.

But how are we to understand this? we are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety or bail for another: it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this instance to shew himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence: Paul became bound for Onesimus. *Philemon 19.* We may help a young man into business, that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our words for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But, 1. It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an incumbrance upon him, intangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong, or suffering wrong; the borrower is servant to the lender, and makes himself very much a slave to the world: Christians therefore that are bought with a price, should not thus without need make themselves the servants of men, *1 Cor. vii. 23.* 2. It is a great folly to intangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but some time or other it comes upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt, *Eccles. viii. 13. Be not surety above thy power, for if thou be surety thou must take care to pay it.* 3. It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission, to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better humble ourselves for an accommodation, than ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. *Make sure thy friend,* by getting clear from thine engagements from him; for rash suretyship is as much the bane of friendship, as that which is prudent, is sometimes the bond of it. 4. Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God, (*1 Tim. v. 22*) for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts: and if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God, humble thyself to him, make sure Christ thy friend, to intercede for thee, pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. *Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids,* till this be done.

6. ¶ Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: 7. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8. Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. 11. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Solomon in these verses applies himself to the sluggard that loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretyship.

He speaks here to the sluggard,

(1.) By way of instruction, ver. 6, 7, 8. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is both to take him to school himself, for if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him, dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers, and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

1. The master he is sent to school to: *Go to the ant, to the bee,* so the Seventy. Man is taught more than the beast of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated, that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects, and be ashamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures, we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instructions to ourselves; by spiritualising common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

2. The application of the mind that is required in order to the learning of this matter. *Consider her ways.* The sluggard is so because he doth not consider, nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the words or works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, *Phil. iii. 17.*

3. The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, consider, and be wise, that is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise; in particular, learn to provide meat in summer; that is, 1. We must prepare for hereafter, and not mind the present time only; not eat up all, and lay up nothing; but, in gathering time, treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight, lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our soul: We must provide meat and food, that which is substantial, and will stand us in stead, and which we shall most need. In the enjoyment of the means of grace provide for the want of them, in life for death, in time for eternity; in the state of probation and preparation, we must provide for the state of retribution. 2. We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniences, even in summer, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in gathering food, and laying it up, and doth not indulge her ease, not take her pleasure, as the grasshopper, that flugs and sports in the summer, and then perishes in the winter. The ants help one another, if one have a grain of corn too big for her to carry home, her neighbours will come in to her assistance. 3. We must improve opportunities, we must gather when it is to be had, as the ant doth in summer and harvest, in the proper time. It is our wisdom to improve the season while that favours us, because that may be done then, which cannot be done at all, or not so well done at another time. *Walk while ye have the light.*

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect, if we idle away our time, she has no guides, overseers, and rulers, but doth it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, and to direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation, the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

(2.) By way of reproof, ver. 9, 10, 11. In these verses,

1. He expostulates with the sluggard, rebuking him, and reasoning with him; calling him to his work, as a master doth his servant that hath overslept himself. *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?* How long wouldst thou sleep if one would let thee alone; when wilt thou think it time to arise? Sluggards should be roused with a How long: This is applicable, 1. To those that are slothful in the way of work and duty; in their duties of their particular calling as men, or their general calling as Christians. *How long wilt thou waste my time?* and when wilt thou be a better husband of it? *How long wilt thou love thine ease?* and when wilt thou learn to deny thyself, and to take pains? *How long wilt thou bury thy talents;* and when wilt thou begin to trade with them? *How long wilt thou delay,* and put off, and trifle away thine opportunities, as one regardless of hereafter? and when wilt thou stir up thyself to do what thou hast to do; which if it be not done, thou art for ever undone? 2. To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger. Hast thou not slept enough? Is it not far in the day? Doth not thy master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? When then wilt thou arise?

2. He exposeth his frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shews how ridiculous he makes himself; when he is roused he stretches himself, and begs, as for alms, for more sleep, more slumber; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work: but observe, he promiseth himself and his master, that he will do no but a little more sleep, a little more slumber, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged, the more it prevails; let him sleep a while, let him slumber a while, and still he is in the same tune; is for a little more sleep, yet a little more; he never thinks he has enough, and yet when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus men's great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, *de die in diem*; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments; a little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep: *Sleep on now, and take your rest.*

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, ver. 11. 1. Poverty and want will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business; if men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward; he that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens, will soon see them to go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to nine-pence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the service of God; those will want oil when they should use it, who provide it not in their vessels. 2. It will come silently and insensibly, will grow upon thee and come step by step, as one that travelleth; but will without fail come at last. *It will leave thee as naked as if thou wast stripped by a highwayman;* so Bishop Patrick. 3. It will come irresistibly, like an armed man, whom thou canst not oppose, or make thy part good against.

12. ¶ A naughty person, a wicked man walketh with a froward mouth. 13. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers. 14. Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth discord. 15. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy. 16. ¶ These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief; 19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.

Solomon here gives us,

(1.) The character of one that is mischievous to man, and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a naughty person that is here spoken of, *Heb. A man of Belial*; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe,

(1.) How a man of Belial is here described; he is a wicked man, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks, and works his designs with a froward mouth, ver. 12. by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He saith and doth every thing, (1.) Very artfully and with design; he has the subtilty of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management, ver. 13. *With his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers;* he expresseth his malice, when he dares not speak out, so some, or rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him whom he makes use of, as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has his ways of concealing what he doth, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve, those only shall be let into the secret that will do any thing he would have them to do; he is a cunning man, and upon the trick, he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be. 2. Very spitefully, and with ill design; it is not so much ambition and covetousness that is in his heart, as downright frowardness, malice, and ill nature: He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself, as to do an ill turn to those about him: He is continually devising one mischief or other, purely for mischief's sake; a man of Belial indeed, i. e. of the devil, not only resembling him in subtilty, but in malice.

2. What his doom is, ver. 15. *His calamity shall come,* and he shall be broken; he that devised mischief, shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come, 1. Without warning it shall come suddenly, suddenly shall he be broken, to punish him for all the wicked arts he had to surprise people into his snares. 2. Without relief; he shall be irreparably broken and never able to piece again, he shall be broken without remedy. What relief can he expect that has disobliged all mankind? He shall come to his end and none shall help him. Dan. xi. 45.

(2.) A catalogue of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be found in those men of Belial, which he had described

described in the foregoing verses; and the list of them (which being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he saith they are six, yea seven) is part of his character, that he *loves discord*. God hates sin, he hates every sin, he can never be reconciled to it; he hates nothing but sin: But there are some sins which he doth in a special manner hate; and all those here mentioned, are such as are injurious to our neighbour. It is an evidence of the good will God bears to mankind, that the sins are in a special manner provoking to him, which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. Therefore the men of Belial must expect their ruin to come suddenly, and without remedy, because their practices are such as the Lord hates, and are an abomination to him, ver. 16. These things which God hates, it is no thanks to us to hate in others, but we must hate them in ourselves.

1. Haughtiness, conceitedness of ourselves, and contempt of others; *a proud look*. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin, and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart, and hates it there, but when it prevails to that degree that the shew of men's countenance witnesseth against them that they over-value themselves, and under-value all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him; for then pride is proud of itself; and sets shame at defiance.

2. Falshood, and fraud, and dissimulation: Next to *a proud look*, nothing is more an abomination to God, than *a lying tongue*; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth; God and all good men hate and abhor lying.

3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness; the devil was from the beginning a liar and a murderer, John viii. 44. and therefore as *a lying tongue*, so *hands that shed innocent blood*, are hateful to God; because they have in them the devil's image, and do him service.

4. Subtily in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, *a heart that designs*, and a head that *deviseth wicked imaginations*, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan, and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin, the more it is an abomination to God.

5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin; *Feet that are swift in running to mischief*, as if they were afraid of losing time, or were impatient of delay in a thing they are so greedy of. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry of sinners in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

6. *False witness-bearing*, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that of all the wicked imaginations can be devised, and against which there is least fence. There cannot be a greater affront to God (to whom in an oath appeal is made) nor a greater injury to our neighbour (all whose interests in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind) than knowingly to give in a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying is two of them; he hates it, and doubly hates it.

7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours; and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace *hates him that sows discord among brethren*, for he delights in concord. Those that by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

20. ¶ My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. 21. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee: when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. 23. For the commandment is a lamp: and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life; 24. To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. 25. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eye-lids. 26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulterers will hunt for the precious life. 27. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? 28. Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? 29. So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. 30. Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry: 31. But if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold, he shall give all the substance of his house. 32. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding: he that doeth it, destroyeth his own soul. 33. A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. 34. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. 35. He will not regard any ransom: neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Here is, (1.) A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God, and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God, both as a *light*, ver. 23. and as a *law*, ver. 20—23. 1. By its arguments it is a *light*, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a *lamp* to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction: The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason: scripture light is the sure light. 2. By its authority it is a *law*, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince; so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as *our father's commandment*, and the *law of our mother*, ver. 20. It is God's commandment, and his law. But, 1. Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves.

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and find it to be of God: but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them. 2. The cautious, counsels, and commands which our parents gave us, agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember the law of a good mother, as well as the commandment of a good father, Ecclesiasticus, iii. 2. The Lord hath given the father honour over the children, and hath confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.

3. We must retain the word of God, and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. 2. We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraint of a good education. *Keep thy father's commandment*, keep it still, and never forsake it. 2. We must never lay them by, no not for a time, ver. 21. Bind them continually, not only upon thine hand, as Moses had directed, Deut. vi. 8. but upon thine heart. Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any farther than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart: There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. Tie them about thy neck, as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain, about thy throat, so the word is; let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in, nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be already to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts, and about our necks.

4. We must make use of the word of God, and of the benefit and advantage that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts, 1. It will be our guide, and we must follow the conduct of it. When thou goest, it shall lead thee, ver. 22. it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in the good and right way: shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of every sinful, dangerous path: It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, *This is the way, walk in it*: It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness; he led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the spirit; he will be thy monitor and support. 2. It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it; when thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so. If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God doth and will command for us. 3. It will be our companion, and we must converse with it; when thou sleepest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night-watches; when thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best, Psalm i. 2. The word of God hath something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day, if we would begin with him in the morning, and let this word be the subject of our first thoughts, When I awake I am still with thee; we are so, if the word be still with us. 4. It will be our life; for as the law is a lamp, and a light for the present, so the reproofs of instruction are the way of life; Those reproofs of the word, which not only shew us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

(2.) Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness: when we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we will not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated, and so largely inculcated.

(1.) One great kindness God designed men in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, ver. 24. The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman that will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, that pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee. Those that will be wrought upon by flattery, make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those that would avoid that snare must take well instructed reproofs as great kindnesses, and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, Prov. xxvii. 5, 6.

(2.) The greatest kindness we can do ourselves, is to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread, detestation, ver. 25. Lust not after her beauty, no not in thy heart, for if thou dost thou hast there already committed adultery with her. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not take thee with her eye-lids. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts, they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery.

Divers arguments Solomon here urged to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

1. It is a sin that impoverisheth men, wastes their estates, and reduceth them to beggary, ver. 26. By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; many a man has been so, who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expence of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavy, which men bring themselves into by their own folly, Job xxxi. 12.

2. It threatens death, it kills men; the adulterers will hunt for the precious life, perhaps designedly, as Delilah for Sampson's, at least eventually, the sin strikes at the life; Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime; the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death; every one knew this; those therefore who for the gratifying of a base lust would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no more than self-murderers.

3. It brings guilt upon the conscience, and debaucheth that: he that toucheth his neighbour's wife, with an immodest touch, he cannot be innocent, ver. 29. 1. He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals, is in danger of being burnt; the way of this sin is down-hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it, hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill fame, that goes in with them, and toucheth them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation, and so throws himself out of God's protection. 2. He that commits adultery is in the high road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner saith, I may venture upon sin, and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace though I go on; he had as good say, I will take fire in my bosom, and not burn my clothes; or, I will go

upon hot coals, and not burn my feet. He that goes into his neighbour's wife, however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lusts kindles the fire of hell.

4. It ruins the reputation, and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, *ver.* 30, 31, 32, 33; perhaps it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the gaol, to Bridewell, to the gallows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished; nay, and with many unblemished; he dares boast of his villainies, and they are made but a jest of, but in the account of God and his law adultery was much the more enormous crime; and if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it. 1. As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity, if he stole meat for the satisfying of his soul when he was hungry, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime, that *men do not despise him*, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him; hunger will break through stone walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him; nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, if he be found stealing, and the evidence be never so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution *seven fold*; the law of Moses appointed, that he that stole a sheep should restore four fold, and an ox five fold, *Exod.* xxii. 1. accordingly David adjudged, *2 Sam.* xii. 6. But we may suppose in these cases concerning which the law had not made provision, the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law: Now, if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore five fold, it was reasonable he that stole a man's goods out of his house, should restore *seven fold*; for there was no law to put him to death, as is with us for burglary, and robbery on the highway. And of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks: the greatest punishment was, that a man might be forced to give all the substance of his house to satisfy the law, and his blood was not attainted. But, 2. Committing adultery is a more heinous crime, Job calls it so, and an iniquity to be punished by the judge, *Job* xxxi. 11. When Nathan would convict David of the evil of his adultery, he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft which in David's judgment deserved to be punished with death, *2 Sam.* xii. 5. and then shewed him that his sin was more exceeding sinful than that. (1.) It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it as a thief may, by saying it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own it was to gratify a brutish lust that would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for wantonness. Therefore *who so committeth adultery with a woman, lacks understanding*, and deserves to be stigmatized as an arrant fool. (2.) It is more severely punished by the law of God; a thief suffered only a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief steals to satisfy his soul, but the adulterer destroys his own soul, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself. This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death, which are the consequences of sin; he that doth it wounds his conscience, corrupts his rational power, extinguisheth all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposeth himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus destroys his own soul. (3.) The infamy of it is indelible, *ver.* 33. It will be a wound to his good name, a dishonour to his family, and though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the reproach of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah, was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

5. It exposeth the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, *ver.* 34, 35. He that toucheth his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy, much more he that debauched her, which, if kept never so secret, might then be discovered by the waters of jealousy, *Numb.* v. 12. And when discovered thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps, than the injured husband, who in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour, as in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the rage of a man, such jealousy is, it is strong as death, and cruel as the grave. In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would perhaps towards one that had robbed him; he will not accept of any commutation, any composition, he will not regard any ransom, though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him; he will not rest content with any thing less than the execution of the law, thou must be stoned to death; if a man would give all the substance of his house, it would atone for the theft, *ver.* 3—11. but not for adultery; in that case it would utterly be condemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not, expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment's fordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.

C H A P. VII.

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts, and therefore he thought he could never say enough to dissuade men from them, that every one may possess his vessel in sanctification, and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness. In this chapter we have, 1. A general exhortation to get our minds principled and governed by the word of God, as a sovereign antidote against this sin, *ver.* 1—5. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in, of being invigled into this snare, *ver.* 6—23. 3. A serious caution inferred from thence in the close, to take heed of all approaches towards this sin, *ver.* 24—27. We should all pray, Lord, lead us not into this temptation.

1. MY son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 2. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. 3. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: 5. That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, *chap.* vi. 20, &c. and ends, *ver.* 5. as that did, *ver.* 24. To keep thee from the strange woman, that is it he aims at; only there he said, keep thy father's commandment, here (which comes all to one)

keep my commandments, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for they are God's commandments that we are to keep his words, his law.

The word of God must be to us,

1. As that which we are most careful of; we must keep it as our treasure, we must lay up God's commandments with us, lay them up safe, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, *ver.* 1. As our life, keep my commandments and live, *ver.* 2. Not only keep them and you shall live, but keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them. It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for by it he lives, and not by bread alone.

2. As that which we are most tender of, keep my law as the apple of thine eye, a little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it; we pray with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye, *Psal.* xvii. 8. That our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight, and they shall be so, (*Zeck.* ii. 8.) if we be in like manner tender of his law, and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye, the law is light; the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

3. As that which we are proud of, and would be ever mindful of, *ver.* 3. Bind them upon thy fingers, let them be precious to thee, look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond ring, as the signet on thy right hand; wear it continually as thy wedding-ring, the badge of thine espousals to God; look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as that which is graven upon the palms of their hands.

4. As that which we are fond of, and are ever thinking of, write them upon the tables of thine heart, as the names of our friends we dearly love, we lay are written in our hearts, Let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written (*Jer.* xvii. 1.) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise, *Heb.* viii. 10. I will write my law in their hearts, which makes the precept practicable and easy.

5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with, *ver.* 4. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, whom I dearly love and take delight in, and call understanding thy kinswoman, to whom I am nearly allied, and for whom I have a pure affection; call her thy friend whom thou court-est. We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, *ver.* 5. Let the word of God confirm our dread of that sin, and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies, and suggest to us answers of all its flatteries.

6. ¶ For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, 7. And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, 8. Passing through the street near her corner and he went the way to her house. 9. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: 10. And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart, 11. (She is loud and stubborn, and her feet abide not in her house. 12. Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) 13. So she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14. I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works; with fine linen of Egypt. 17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us solace ourselves with loves. 19. For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey; 20. He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. 21. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22. He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks: 23. Till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd and profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot with them would be a heroine, nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman, and drawing in the country-squire; her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up: Thus fools make a mock at sin. But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story; the impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man, with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts, and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or made case, but I doubt it was too true, and which is worse, that notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses, it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game, and with the like success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and as such inspected the manners of his subjects, looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give a warning of the approach of the enemies, and

and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon doth here, where we may observe the account he gives,

1. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction. 1. He was a *young man*, ver. 7. Fleeshly lusts are called *youthful lusts*, 2 Tim. ii. 22. not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but to aggravate them, rather as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for an ill life ever after; and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin. 2. He was a young man, *void of understanding*, that went abroad into the world, not principled as he ought to have been, with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, Job xxviii. 28. Those become an easy prey to Satan, who, when they are arrived to the stature of men, have scarce the understanding of children. 3. He kept bad company; he was a *young man among the youths*, a silly young man among the simple ones; if being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were elder and wiser than himself, there had been hopes of him; Christ at twelve years old conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this; but if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will be, and hardened in their simplicity. 4. He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but *passed through the street*, as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom, was *abundance of idleness*, Ezek. xvi. 49. He went in a starched stately manner, so (they say) the word signifies, he appeared to be a nice formal top; the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well, and walk with a good air; sit game for that bird of prey to fly at. 5. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by day-light, from which the evening calls men into their repose; and having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, begins to move in the twilight in the evening, ver. 9. And he chooseth the black and dark night as fittest for his purpose, not the moon light nights, when he might be discovered. 6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went *near her corner, the way to her house*, ver. 8. contrary to Solomon's advice, Prov. v. 4. *Come not nigh the door of her house*. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an ill house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in, and when we have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets into temptation.

(2.) Of the person tempting; not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife, ver. 19. and for aught appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet in the twilight of the evening when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described, 1. By her dress; she had the *attire of a harlot*, ver. 10. gaudy and flaunting to set her off as a beauty; perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and *en dishabille*. The purity of the heart will shew itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women professing godliness. 2. By her craft and management; she is *subtil of heart*, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes. 3. By her temper and carriage; *she is loud and stubborn*, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and head-strong, all tongue, and that will have her saying right or wrong, impatient of check and controul, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved by her husband or parents, ministers or friends; she is a *daughter of Belial*, that will endure no yoke. 4. By her place, not her own house, she hates the confinement and employment of that, her *feet abide not there*, any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company; now *she is without* in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now *in the streets of the city*, under pretence of seeing how the market goes; she is here and there, and every where but where she should be, *she lies in wait at every corner*, to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Those to whom home is a prison, virtue is a penance.

(3.) Of the temptation itself, and the management of it. She met the young spark, perhaps she knew him, however she knew by his fashions he was such a one as she wished for, so she *caught him about the neck and kissed him*, contrary to all the rules of modesty, ver. 13. and waited not for his compliments or courtship, but *with an impudent face* invited him not only to her house but to her bed.

1. She courted him to come and *sup with her*, ver. 14, 15. *I have peace-offerings with me*. Hereby she gives him to understand, (1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with so many blessings, that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was beforehand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked.

(2.) Her profession of piety; she had been to-day at the temple, and was as well respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord; she had paid her vows, and, she thought, made even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes, that when they come to count and discount with God, he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace-offerings and their vows, as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a shew of piety should become the shelter of iniquity, which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceeding sinful; and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous designs. (3.) Her present plenty of good provisions. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings, was by the law returned back to the offerers to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten *the same day*, and none of it left until the morning, Lev. vii. 15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess: Come, said she, come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it. It is pity the peace-offerings should thus become, in a bad sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God, should become the food and fuel of a base lust.

But this is not all; to strengthen the temptation, 1. She pretends to have a mighty great affection for him above any man; *therefore, because I have a good supper upon the table, I come forth to meet thee*, for no friend in the world should be so welcome to it as thou shalt, ver. 15. Thou art he whom I come on purpose to seek, to seek diligently; came myself, and would not send a servant. Sure he cannot deny her his company, when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself, that go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige. 2. She would have it thought that providence itself countenanced her choice of

him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to come and *lie with her*; they will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them; where he should find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him; to please his eye, it is *decked with covering of tapestry*, and *carved works*, exquisite fine, he never saw the like; to please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth, they are far fetched and dear bought, they are of *fine linen of Egypt*, ver. 16. to gratify his smell, it is *perfumed with the sweetest scents*, ver. 17. Come therefore and *let us take our fill of love*, ver. 18. Of love doth she say? of lust she means, brutish lust: but it is pity the name of love should be thus abused; true love is from heaven, this is from hell; how can they pretend to solace themselves, and love one another, who are really ruining themselves and one another?

3. She anticipates the objection which he might make of the danger of it; Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act, he will make them pay dear for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? Never fear, saith she, the good man is not at home, ver. 19. she doth not call him her husband, for she *forfeits the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God*; but the good man of the house, whom I am weary of. Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spoke of her husband, would not call him so, but He, Gen. xxxix. 14. It is therefore with good reason taken notice of to Sarah's praise, that she spake respectfully of her husband, calling him Lord. She pleased herself with this, that he is not at home, and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore whatever company she has, she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye, and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No, he is gone a long journey, and cannot return on a sudden; he appointed the day of his return, and he never useth to come home sooner than he saith he will. He hath taken a bag of money with him; either, (1.) To trade with, to buy goods with, and he will not return till he has laid it all out: it was a pity that an honest industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken of his absence, when it is upon business for the good of his family. Or, (2.) To spend and revel with; whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was an ill husband, so she would represent him, because she was resolved to be an ill wife, and must have that for an excuse; it is often groundlessly suggested, but it is never a sufficient excuse. He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad (saith she) and why should not I do the same at home?

4. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, ver. 21. It should seem the youth, though very simple, had no ill design, else a word, a beck, a wink would have served, and there had not needed all this harangue; but though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet *with her much fair speech she caused him to yield*; his corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but *with the flattery of her lips she forced him*; he could not stop his ear against such a charm, but surrendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens that plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetoric cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men that its allurements soon prevail by flattery andattery.

With what pity doth Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman. 1. He gives him up for gone, alas, he is undone. He goes to the slaughter; for houses of uncleanness are slaughter-houses to precious souls: *A dart will presently strike through his liver*; going without his breast-plate he shall receive his death's wound, ver. 23. It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away; he is perfectly lost to all good, his conscience is debauched, a door is opened to all other vices, and this will certainly end in his endless damnation. 2. That which makes his case the more piteous is, that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture when he is led to the slaughter; *The fool* (that is the drunkard, for of all sinners drunkards are the greatest fools, they wilfully turn themselves into fools) he is led to the correction of the flocks, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The bird that *hatheth to the snare*, looks only at the bait, and promiseth herself a good bit from that, and considers not that it is for her life. Thus this unthinking unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon doth not here tell us, that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did, he was himself so affected with the mischief she did, and had such an indignation at it.

24. ¶ Harken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25. Let not thine heart decline to her ways: go not astray in her paths. 26. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

We have here the application of the foregoing story; *harken to me* therefore, and not to such seducers, ver. 24. Give ear to a father, and not to an enemy.

(1.) Take good counsel when it is given you, ver. 25. *Let not thine heart decline to her ways*; never leave the paths of virtue, though strait, and narrow and solitary, up hill, for the adulteress, though green and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as *thy ear incline* to them, never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as these. Let reason and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou *goest in her paths*, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou *goest astray*, thou art out of the right way, the safe way, therefore take heed, *go not astray*, lest thou wander endlessly.

(2.) Take fair warning when it is given you.

1. Look back, and see what mischief this sin hath done: the adulteress has been the ruin, not of here and there one, but she hath *cast down many wounded*. Thousands have been undone, now and for ever, by this sin; and those, not only the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken, but *many strong men have been slain by her*, ver. 26. Herein perhaps he has an eye especially to Sampson, who was slain by this sin, and perhaps to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away, that he himself should not die

die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken; *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.*

2. Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it, *ver. 27. Her house, though richly decked and furnished, and called a house of pleasure, is the way to hell, and her chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the chambers of death and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore stand in awe, and sin not.*

C H A P. VIII.

The word of God is two fold, and bath are wisdom; for a word without wisdom is of little value, and wisdom without a word of little use. Now, 1. Divine revelation is the word and wisdom of God, and that pure religion and undefiled, which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful and well worthy of all acceptation, ver. 1-21. God by it instructs, and governs, and blesses the children of men. 2. The Redeemer is the eternal word and wisdom, the logos, he is the wisdom that speaks to the children of men, in the former part of the chapter; all divine revelation passeth through his hand, and centers in him; but of him as the personal wisdom, the second person in the Godhead, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks, ver. 23-31. And then concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men, diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word.

1. **D**OTH not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? 2. She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths, 3. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. 4. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man. 5. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. 6. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. 7. For my mouth shall speak truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. 9. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. 20. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. 11. For wisdom is better than rubies: and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation, is here largely represented to us, as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error; and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

1. The things revealed are *easy to be known*, for they *belong to us and to our children*, Deut. xxix. 29. and we need not fear up to heaven, or dive into the depths to get the knowledge of them, Deut. xxx. 11. for they are published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation, Psalm xix. 1. more fully by the consciences of men, and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by *Moses and the prophets*: let them hear them.

The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for,

(1.) They are proclaimed aloud, *ver. 1. Doth not wisdom cry? yes, she cries aloud and doth not spare*, Isa. lviii. 1. *she puts forth her voice*, as one in earnest, and desirous to be heard. *Jesus stood and cried*, John vii. 37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, Deut. xxvii. 14. And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

(2.) They are proclaimed from on high, *ver. 2. she stands in the top of high places*; it was from the top of mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we *turn away from him that speaketh from heaven*, a high place indeed, Heb. xii. 25. The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

(3.) They are proclaimed in the places of concourse, where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. *Jesus spake in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted*. John xviii. 20. Every man that passeth by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

(4.) They are proclaimed there where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published in the places of the path, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shewed if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; *Thou shalt then hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way*, Isa. xxx. 31. Foolish man knows not how to go to the city, Eccles. x. 15. and therefore wisdom stands ready to direct him, *stands at the gates, at the entry of the city*, ready to tell him *where the fears' house is*, 1 Sam. ix. 18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them *at the coming in at the doors*, saying, *peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there*, it shall certainly abide upon it. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of, while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

(5.) They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we would have neglected it; therefore wisdom speaks to us; *Unto you, O men, I call*, ver. 4. not to angels, they need not these instructions; not to devils, they are past them; not to the brute creatures, they are not capable of them: but to you, O men, who are taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation sent. *My voice is to the sons of men*, that are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom one would think

it should be very welcome. It is not to you, O Jews only, that wisdom cries, or to you, O gentlemen, or you, O scholars; but to you, O men, O sons of men, even the meanest.

(6.) They are designed to make them wise, *ver. 5. they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it: O ye simple ones, understand wisdom.* Though you are never so simple, wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but if you be ruled by her, will undertake to give you *an understanding heart*. When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the *simple understand wisdom*.

2. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well-worthy of all acceptation. We are concerned to hear; for,

1. They are of inestimable value; they are *excellent things*, *ver. 6. princely things*, so the word is: Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent, that in comparison with them, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be *excellent things*.

2. They are of incontestible equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness; they are *right things*, *ver. 6. all in righteousness*, *ver. 8. and nothing froward or perverse in them*. All the dictates and directions of revealed religion, are consonant to, and perfective of the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in it that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature; nothing that we have reason to complain of: all God's precepts concerning all things are right.

3. They are of unquestionable truth; wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon: *My mouth shall speak truth*, *ver. 7. the whole truth, and nothing but the truth*, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true, there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful witness, is the truth itself; *wickedness, i. e. lying, is an abomination to his lips*. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say, as from what God saith to us. His word to us is *yea, and amen*; never then let ours be *yea and nay*.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those that take them aright, that understand themselves aright, that have not their judgments blinded and biased by the world and flesh, that are not under the power of prejudice, that are taught of God, and whose understandings he has opened; who impartially *seek knowledge*, take pains for it, and have found it in the inquiries they have hitherto made: to them (1.) They are all plain, and not hard to be understood: If the book is sealed, it is to those that are willingly ignorant: *If our gospel be hid, it is to them that are lost*; but to those who *depart from evil, which is understanding*, who have that *good understanding*, which they have that *do the commandments*, to them they are all plain, and there is no difficulty in them: The way of religion is a high-way, and the *waysfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*, Isa. xxxv. 8. They therefore do a great wrong to the common people, who deny them the use of the scripture, under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people. (2.) They are all right, and not hard to be submitted to. Those that discern things that differ, that know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all wisdom's dictates, and therefore without murmuring or disputing govern themselves by them.

3. From all this he infers, that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world, *ver. 10, 11. Receive my instructions and not silver*. Instruction must not only be heard but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this *rather than choice gold*; that is, 1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it, that if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy, and better provided for every condition of life, than if we had never so much silver and gold. *Wisdom is, in itself, and therefore must be in our account, better than rubies*: It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; shew it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for the wealth of this world, if we had it, it were not worthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness. 2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time *received his good things*.

12. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. 13. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate. 14. Council is mine, and found wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength. 15. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. 17. I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. 18. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. 19. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. 20. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: 21. That I may cause those that love me, to inherit substance: and I will fill their treasures.

Wisdom here is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word, and Christ in the heart; not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the word, in whom all divine revelation centers; it is the soul formed by the word, it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

1. Divine wisdom gives men good heads, *ver. 12. I wisdom dwell with prudence*, not with carnal policy, the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2 Cor. i. 42. but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering the conversation; that wisdom of the prudent which is to *understand his way*, and is in all cases *profitable to direct*; the wisdom of the

the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing good. *Wisdom dwells with prudence*; for prudence is the product of religion, and an ornament to religion; and there are more *wisely inventions* found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences, and for the effectual countermine of Satan's devices, and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers, or the politics of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; *he dwells with prudence*; for his whole undertaking is the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and in it God *abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence*. Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient: he had found out many inventions for our ruin, he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that we must conclude, he that ordered it *dwells with prudence*.

2. It gives men good hearts, ver. 13. True religion consisting in the fear of the Lord, which is the wisdom before recommended, teacheth men, 1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God, and destructive to the soul. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way*; to hate sin as sin, and therefore to hate every false way. Wherever there is an awe of God, there is a dread of sin, as an evil, and only evil. 2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceit of ourselves, pride and arrogance are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those which have the spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them ourselves. *The froward mouth*, i. e. peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion, that however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and froward, that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

3. It has a great influence upon public affairs, and the well governing of all societies, ver. 14. Christ, as God, hath strength and wisdom, wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is *the wisdom of God, and the power of God*. To all that are his, he is made of God both *strength and wisdom*; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful Counsellor, and gives that grace which alone is found in wisdom: he is understanding itself, and has strength for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain: wherever it is, it is understanding, it has strength, it will be all to us that we need, both for services and sufferings: where the word of God dwells richly, it makes a man perfect, and furnisheth him thoroughly for every good word and work.

Kings, and princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore wisdom faith, *By me kings reign*; ver. 15. 16. that is, 1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are intrusted with the administration of it, have their commission from Christ: it is a branch of his kingly office, that by his king's reign; from him, to whom all judgment is committed, their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him. 2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have, they are indebted to the grace of Christ for it; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; and they are to their subjects what he makes them. 3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought: they decree justice, while they rule in the fear of God. Those rule well whom religion rules.

4. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that faith, *I love them that love me*, ver. 17. They that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, shall be loved of him with a peculiar distinguished love; he will love them, and manifest himself to them.

2. They shall be happy in the success of their enquiries after him. *They that seek me early*, seek an acquaintance with me, and an interest in me, seek it early, i. e. seek it earnestly, seek it first, before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek him, they shall find what they seek; Christ shall be their's, and they shall be his; he never said, *seek in vain*.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better. (1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as infinite wisdom sees good for them, ver. 11. they are *with Christ*, i. e. he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in this world, gains them a reputation, and so increaseth their estates; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages, 1. That they are riches and righteousness, i. e. riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways; and riches charitably used, for alms are called *righteousness*: Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have *riches and righteousness*. 2. That therefore they are durable riches; wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got, will wear well, and will be left to the children's children; and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity, is set out to the best interest, and so will be durable; for the friends made by the mammon of unrighteousness, when we fail, will receive us into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9. it will be found after many days, for the days of eternity. (2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world, ver. 12. *My fruit is better than gold*, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, and my revenue better than the choicest silver; will serve a better trade. We may assure ourselves, that not only wisdom's products at last, but her incomes in the mean time: not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best, either of the possessions, or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, ver. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is better than gold, than fine gold, that it leads in the way of righteousness, shows us that way and goes before us in it; the way that God would have us walk in, and which will certainly bring us to our desired end: It leads in the midst of the paths of judgment, and saves us from deviating on either hand. *In medio virtutis*. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth and so leads them in the way of righteousness, and they walk after the Spirit.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, ver. 21. Therefore wisdom leads in the paths of righteousness, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she cause them to inherit substance, and may fill their treasures; which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory. 1. It is substantial, it is substance itself; it

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is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences; spiritual and eternal things, are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well grounded; the promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. *They inherit substance*, i. e. their inheritance hereafter is substantial, it is a weight of glory, it is substance, Heb. x. 31, all their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship.

2. It is satisfying; it will not only fill their hands, but fill their treasures; not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies, Psal. xvii. 11. but not their treasures; for they cannot in them secure to themselves goods for many years, perhaps they may be deprived of them this night; but let the treasures of the soul be never so capacious, there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity: Her fruit therefore is better than gold.

22. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. 25. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth: 26. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. 27. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: 28. When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: 29. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the water should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: 30. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: 31. Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.

That it is an intelligent and divine person that here speaks seems very plain, and that it is not meant of a mere essential property of the divine nature; for wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent, divine person, can be no other but the Son of God himself; to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom, are attributed in other scriptures, and we must explain scripture by itself. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom as it is an attribute of God, by which he made the world and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them; yet the Spirit of God, who induced what he wrote, carried him, as David often, to such expressions as could agree to no other but the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great truths concerning him. All divine revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, and here we are told who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the four first verses of St. John's gospel; *In the beginning was the Word, &c.*

Concerning the Son of God. Observe here,

1. His personality, and distinct subsistence; one with the Father, and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself whom the Lord possessed, ver. 22. *was set up*, ver. 23. *was brought forth*, ver. 24, 25. *was by him*, ver. 29. *for he was the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

2. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for the Lord possessed him, as his own Son, his beloved Son, laid him in his bosom; he was brought forth as the only begotten of the Father, and this, before all worlds; which is most largely insisted upon here. The word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time; and therefore it must follow that it was from eternity. *The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way*, i. e. of his eternal counsels, for those were before his works: this way indeed had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains herself, ver. 23. *I was set up from everlasting*: the Son of God was in the eternal counsels of God designed and advanced to be the wisdom and power of the Father, light and life, and all in all, both in the creation and in the redemption of the world.

That he was brought forth as to his being, and set up as to the divine counsels concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed, Psal. xc. 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth*. 1. *Before the earth was*, and that was made in the beginning, before man was made; therefore the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam was made of the earth, the second had a being before the earth, and therefore is not of the earth, John iii. 31. 2. *Before the sea was*, ver. 24. *When there were no depths*, in which the waters were gathered together, no fountains, from which those waters might arise; none of that deep, on which the Spirit moved for the production of the visible creation, Gen. i. 2, 3. *Before the mountains were*, the everlasting mountains, ver. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the divine counsels, asks him, Job xv. 7. *Wast thou made before the hills?* no, thou wast not, but before the hills was the eternal word brought forth.

4. Before the habitable parts of the world which men cultivate, and reap the profits of, ver. 26. *the fields*, in the vallies and plains, to which the mountains are as a wall, which are the highest part of the dust of the world: *The first part of the dust*, so some; the atoms which compose the several parts of the world. *The chief or principal part of the dust*, so it may be read and understood of man, who was made of the dust of the ground, and is dust, but it is the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust refined: the eternal word had a being before man was made, for in him was the life of men.

3. His agency in making the world: he not only had a being before the world, but he was present, not as a spectator, but as the architect when the world was made. God puzzled and humbled Job, by asking him, *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? who hath laid the measures thereof?* &c. Job xxxviii. 4, &c. Wast thou that eternal Word and Wisdom, which was the prime manager of that great affair? no; thou art of yesterday; but here the Son of God referring, as it should seem, to that discourse God had with Job, declares himself to be that which Job could not pretend to be a witness of, and a worker in, the creation of the world. *By him God made the worlds*, Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2. Col. i. 16. 2. When on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God bespoke the light, and with a word produced it, this eternal Wisdom was that

that almighty Word; then *I was there, when he prepared the heavens*, the fountain of that light, which, whatever is here, is there substantial. 2. He was no less active, when, on the second day, he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and set that as a compass upon the face of the depth, ver. 27. surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain. Or it may refer to that exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind. 3. He was also employed in the third day's work, when the waters above the heavens were gathered together by the *establishing of the clouds above*, and those under the heavens, by the *strengthening of the fountains of the deep*, which send forth those waters, ver. 28. and by the preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, ver. 29. This speaks much to the honour of this eternal Wisdom, for by this instance God proves himself a God greatly to be feared, Jer. v. 22. that he hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea, that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he hath appointed the foundation of the earth. How able, how fit is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

4. The infinite complacency which the father had in him, and he in the father, ver. 30. *I was by him, as one brought up with him*. As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal counsel he was brought up with him; which intimates, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called *the Son of his love*, Col. i. 13. but the mutual consciousness and good understanding that was between them, concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake, and about which the counsel of peace was between them both, Zech. vi. 13. He was *alumnus patris*, the father's pupil, as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service which in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go through with, and is therein taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father; he is *my servant whom I uphold*, Isa. xlii. 1. He did what he saw the Father do, John v. 19. pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the commandment he received from his Father, and all this *as one brought up with him*. He was *daily his Father's delight*, (*mine elect in whom my soul delighteth*, saith God Isa. xlii. 1.) and he also rejoiced always before him. This may be understood, either, 1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the divine nature. Or, 2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son when he made the world: God saw every thing that the Son made, and, behold it was very good, it pleased him, and therefore his Son was daily, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account, his delight; allude to Exod. xxxix. 43. and the Son also did himself rejoice before him, in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, Psalm civ. 31. Or, 3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man, was well pleased with what he proposed, Matt. iii. 17. and therefore loved him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep; he put a confidence in him that he would go through his work, and not fail or fly off: The Son also rejoiced always before him, delighted to do his will, Psalm xl. 8. stuck close to his undertaking as one that was well satisfied in it, and when it came to the setting to, expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, *Lo, I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me*.

5. The gracious concern he had for mankind, ver. 31. Wisdom rejoiced not so much in the rich products of the earth or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as in the habitable parts of it, for her delights were with the sons of men; not only in the creation of man, it is spoken with a peculiar air of pleasure, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*; but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was ordained before the world to that great work, 1 Pet. i. 20. A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought through his grace to his glory, and those were they in whom his delights were: his church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, that the Lord might dwell even among them that had been rebellious; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet because it would issue in the glory of his Father and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him, and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by that glorious undertaking of his.

32. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children; for blessed are they that keep my ways. 33. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. 34. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door. 35. For who so findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. 36. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.

We have here the application of wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it, is to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good: not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

(1.) An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of wisdom: to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent hearers of the word; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard; *hearken unto me, O ye children*, ver. 32. read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for both, and hear him in both speaking to you. Let children in age hearken, for it is their learning age, and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by, as to be governed by all their days. Let children in relation, hearken to God as their father, to wisdom as their mother, to whom they ought to be in subjection and live; let wisdom's children justify wisdom by hearkening to her, and shew themselves to be indeed her children.

We must hear wisdom's words, 1. Submissively, and with a willing heart, ver. 33. *Hear instruction, and refuse it not*, either as that which you need not, or as that which you like not: it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it; they that reject the counsel of God reject it against themselves, Luke vii. 30. Refuse it not now, lest you have no other offer. 2. Constantly, and with an attentive ear. We

must hear wisdom so as to watch daily at her gates, as beggars to receive an alms; as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants with humility and patience, and ready observance at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house wisdom keeps, for every day is a school day; what a good school, for every day is a lecture day: while we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing wisdom, and learning instructions from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must watch at his gates. (1.) We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into and keep in a constant settled course of communion with God. (2.) We must be very humble in our attendance on divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them: as David, who would gladly be a door-keeper in the house of God. (3.) We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance: must watch and wait; as Christ's hearers, that hanged on him, to hear him, as the word in the original is, *Luke xix. 48. and chap. xxi. 38. Came early in the morning to hear him*.

2. We must be conscientious doers of the work, for we are blessed only in our deed. It is not enough to hearken unto wisdom's words, but we must keep her ways, ver. 32. i. e. do every thing that she prescribes; keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them; keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them. *Hear instruction and be wise*, let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation. What we know is known in vain, if it do not make us wise, ver. 33.

(2.) An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to wisdom. They are blessed, ver. 32. And again, ver. 34. They are blessed that watch and wait at wisdom's gates; even their attendance there is their happiness, it is the best place they can be in; they are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long; let them continue to knock a while, and it shall be open to them. They are seeking wisdom, and they shall find what they seek: but will it make amends if they do find it? Yes, ver. 35. *Who so findeth me, findeth life*, i. e. all happiness, all that good which he needs or can desire. He finds life in that grace, which is the principle of spiritual life, and the pledge of eternal life. He findeth life, for he shall obtain favour of the Lord, and in his favour is life. If the king's favour is towards a wife son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is wisdom, and he that findeth Christ, that obtaineth an interest in him, he findeth life; for Christ is life to all believers, he that hath the son of God hath life, eternal life, and he shall obtain favour of the Lord, who is well pleased with all those that are in Christ, nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ, and be found in him.

(3.) The doom past upon all those that reject wisdom and her proposals, ver. 36. They are left to ruin themselves, and wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at nought all her counsel. 1. Their crime is very great, they sin against wisdom, rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it; they sin against Christ, they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed hating wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him, who is the centre of all beauty, and fountain of all goodness, love itself? 2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves. (1.) They that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves, they wrong their own souls, they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves; sin is a wrong to the soul. (2.) They that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin, they that hate me, love death; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judgeth; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*.

CHAP. IX.

Christ and sin are rivals for the soul of man, and here we are told how they both make their court to it, to have the innermost and uppermost place in it. And the design of this representation is to set before us life and death, good and evil; and there needs no more but a fair stating of the case, to determine us which of those to choose, and surrender our hearts to. They are both brought in making entertainment for the soul, and inviting it to accept of the entertainment; concerning both we are told what the issue will be: and the matter being thus laid before us, let us consider, take advice, and speak our minds. And we are therefore concerned to put a value upon our own souls, because we see there is such striving for them. 1. Christ, under the name of wisdom, invites us to accept of his entertainment, and so to enter into acquaintance and communion with him, ver. 1--6. And having foretold the different success of his invitation, ver. 7--9. he shews, in short, what he requires from us, ver. 10. And what he designs for us, ver. 11. And then leaves it to our choice what we will do, ver. 12. 2. Sin under the character of a foolish woman, courts us to accept of her entertainment, ver. 13--16. Pretends it is very charming, ver. 17. But Solomon tells what the reckoning will be, ver. 18. And now choose you this day whom you will close with.

1. WISDOM hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. 2. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. 3. She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city. 4. Who so is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 5. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. 6. Forfake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. 7. He that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. 8. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wife man, and he will love thee. 9. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will yet be wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life

life shall be increased. 12. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest; thou alone shalt bear it.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent queen, very great, and very generous; that Word of God is this wisdom, in which God makes known his good-will towards men; God the Word is this wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He that in the chapter before shewed his grandeur and glory, as the Creator of the world, here shews his grace and goodness as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, to wisdoms; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery. Now, observe here,

1. The rich provision which wisdom hath made for the reception of all those that will be her disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, from whence, it is probable, our Saviour borrowed those parables, in which he compared the *kingdom of heaven* to a great supper, *Matth. xxvii.* 2. *Luke xiv. 16.* And so it was prophesied of, *Isa. xxxv. 6.* It is such a feast as Abimelech made, to *show the riches of his glorious kingdom.* The grace of the gospel is thus set before us in the ordinance of the Lord's supper to bid her guests welcome,

(1.) Here is a stately palace provided, *ver. 1.* wisdom not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose; and both to strengthen it; and to beautify it, she has *hewn out her seven pillars*, which make it to be very firm and look very great. Heaven is the house which wisdom has built, to entertain all her guests that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; that is her Father's house, where there are many mansions, and whither she is gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, therefore in it we have no continuing city; but heaven is a city that has foundations, has pillars. The church is wisdom's house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God, as by *seven pillars*. Probably, Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade the people to resort, both to worship God and to receive the instructions of wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended.

(2.) Here is a splendid feast got ready, *ver. 2.* She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, plenty of meat and drink are provided, and all of the best. She hath killed her sacrifice, so the word is; it is a sumptuous, but a sacred feast; a feast upon a sacrifice. Christ has offered up himself a sacrifice for us, and it is his *flesh that is meat indeed, and his blood that is drink indeed*; the Lord's supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is mingled with something richer than itself, to give it a more than ordinary spirit and flavour. She has completely furnished her table with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire.—Righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurances of God's love, the consolations of the Spirit, and all the pledges and earnest of eternal life. Observe, It is all wisdom's own doings; she hath killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine: which notes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision; he doth not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands; and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end, which wisdom herself has the sitting up of.

2. The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general, to come and take part of these provisions. (1.) She employs her servants to invite round about in the country, *she has sent forth her maidens*, *ver. 3.* The ministers of the gospel are commissioned and commanded to give notice of the preparations which God has made in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves or the word of God, and with an exact observance of their lady's orders, are to call upon all they meet with, even in the *high ways and hedges*, to come and feast with wisdom, for *all things are now ready*. *Luke xiv. 23.* (2.) She herself cries upon the highest places of the city, as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them rejecting their own mercies for lying vanities. Our Lord Jesus was himself the publisher of his own gospel; when he had sent forth his disciples, he followed them to confirm what they said; nay, it began to be spoken by the Lord, *Heb. ii. 3.* he stood and cried, *Come unto me.*

We see who invites; now let us observe.

(1.) To whom the invitation is given: *Who is simple, and wants understanding*, *ver. 4.* If we were to make an entertainment, of all people, we would not care for, much less court, the company of such; but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving: have I need of mad-men? But wisdom invites such, because what she has to give, is what they have most need, and it is their welfare that she consults and aims at in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise; and he that wants a heart, so the word is, let him come hither, and he shall have one. Her preparations are rather physic than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever he be; the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves; though they be never so foolish, yet, 1. They shall be welcome. 2. They may be helped; they shall neither be despised, nor despaired of. Our Saviour came, *not to call the righteous, but sinners*: not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see, *John ix. 41.* but the simple, i. e. those that are sensible of their simplicity, and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to become a fool, that he may be wise, *1 Cor. iii. 18.*

(2.) What the invitation is. 1. We are invited to wisdom's house, *turn in hither*; I say, we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invited, that are *simple, and want understanding*; wisdom's doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some talk with them, one word for their own good, nor hath she any other design upon them.

2. We are invited to her table, *ver. 5.* Come, eat of my bread, i. e. taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith acting on the promises of the gospel, applying them to ourselves, and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink, we make our own, and are nourished and refreshed by it; and so are our souls by the word of God; it has that in it that is *meat and drink* to those that understand themselves.

(3.) What is required of those who may have the benefit of this invitation, *ver. 6.* 1. They must break off from all bad company; *for sake the foolish*, converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works. The first step towards virtue is to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious: *Depart from me, ye evil doers.* 2. They must awake, and arise from the dead; they must live, not in pleasure, for those that do so are dead while they live, but in the service of God, for those only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose: live not a mere animal life, as brutes, but now at length live the life of men. Live, and you shall live, live spiritually, and you

shall live eternally, *Eph. v. 14.* 3. They must choose the paths of wisdom, and keep to them; *Go in the way of understanding*, i. e. govern thyself from henceforward by the rules of religion and right reason. It is not enough to *for sake the foolish*, but we must join ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

3. The instructions which wisdom gives to the maidens she sends to invite; to the ministers and others, that in their places are clearly using to serve her interests and designs. She tells them, 1. What their work must be; not only to tell in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must apply themselves to particular persons; must tell them of their faults, *reprove, rebuke*, *ver. 7, 8.* They must instruct them how to amend, *teach*, *ver. 9.* The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word, *for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.* 2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.

(1.) They would meet with some scorners and wicked men, that would mock the messengers of the Lord, and mislead them; would *teach them to scorn* that invite them to the feast of the Lord, as they did, *2 Cor. xiii. 10*; would *treat them spitefully*, *Matth. xxii. 6.* And though they are not forbidden to invite these simple ones to wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation, by reproving and rebuking them; *reprove not a scorner; cast not these pearls before swine*, *Matth. vii. 6.* Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, *Let them alone*, *Matth. xv. 14.* Do not reprove them; 1. In justice to them; for they have forfeited the favour of father means who scorn the means they have had. They that are thus *filthy, let them be filthy still*; that are *joined to idols, let them alone*; *so, we turn to the Gentiles.* 2. In prudence to yourselves; because, if you reprove them, 1. You lose your labour, and so *get to yourselves home* for the disappointment. 2. You exasperate them; do it never so wisely and tenderly, if you do it faithfully, they will hate you; they will load you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproofs will be likely to do more hurt than good.

(2.) They would meet with others that are wise and good, and just: thanks be to God, all are not scorners. We meet with some, that are so wise for themselves, so full of themselves, as to be willing and glad to be taught; and when we meet with such, 1. If there be occasion, we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise, but there is that in them which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults, because we have a veneration for his wisdom; nor must a wise man think that his wisdom exempts him from reproof, when he has or hath any thing foolishly; but the more wisdom a man has the more desirous he should be to have his weakness shew itself, *become a little foolish*, is a great blemish to him *that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.* 2. With our reproofs we must give them instruction, *we must teach them*, *ver. 9.* 3. We may expect that it will be taken as a kindness, *Psal. cxli. 5.* A wise man will reckon those his friends that deal faithfully with him: rebuke such a one, and he will love thee for thy plain dealing; will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if there be occasion. It is as great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well, as to give it well. 4. Being taken well, it will do good, and answer the intention. A wise man will be made wiser by the reproofs and instructions that are given him, he will *increase in learning*; will increase in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, or so good that they need not be better, and therefore need not be taught. We must still press forward and follow on to know, till we come to the perfect man. Give to a wise man, so it is in the original, give him advice, give him a reproof, give him comfort, and he will be yet wiser; give him occasion, so the Seventy, occasion to shew his wisdom, and he will shew it, and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits.

4. The instruction she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them.

1. Let them know wherein true wisdom doth consist, and what will be their entertainment at wisdom's table, *ver. 10.* (1.) The heart must be principled with the fear of God, *that is the beginning of wisdom.* A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, is that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step towards true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may at first have torment, but love will by degrees cast out the torment of it. (2.) The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God; *the knowledge of holy things* (the word is plural) *is understanding*; the things pertaining to the service of God (those are called holy things) that pertain to our sanctification; reproof is called *that which is holy*, *Matth. vii. 6.* Or the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which *holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*; this is *understanding*; it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in the most stead, and turn to the best account.

2. Let them know what will be the advantages of this wisdom, *ver. 11:* *By me thy days shall be multiplied*; it will contribute to the health of thy body, and so the years of thy life on earth shall be increased, while men's folly and intemperance shall shorten their days; it will bring them to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied *ad infinitum*, and the years of thy life shall be increased without end. There is no true wisdom, but in the way of religion; and no true use, but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing or refusing this fair offer, *ver. 12.* Here is, 1. The happiness of those that embrace it: *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*; thou wilt be the gainer by it, not wisdom; a man cannot be profitable to God; it is to our own good that we are thus courted; thou wilt not leave the gain to others, as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called another man's, *Luke xvi. 12.* but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world. Those that are wise for their souls, are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man; nor do any consult their own true interest, but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficial in this world, and intitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come. 2. The shame and ruin of those that slight it. *If thou scornest wisdom's proffer, thou alone shalt bear it*; i. e. (1.) Thou shalt bear the blame of it; those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves. It is not alone of God, he is not the author of sin; Satan can only tempt, he cannot force, and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself. (2.) Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest: it will be to thine own destruction, and thy blood will be on thine own head; and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation. Son, remember, that thou hadst this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it: thou stoodst fair for life, but didst choose death rather.

13 ¶ A foolish woman is clamorous, she is simple, and knoweth nothing. 14. For she sitteth at the door

of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, 15. To call passengers who go right on their ways. 16. Who is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, the faith to him, 17. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

We have heard what Christ has to say, to engage our affections to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the most he gains his point, and Wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

1. Who is the tempter, a foolish woman: folly herself, in opposition to wisdom. Carnal, sensual pleasure, I take to be especially meant by this foolish woman, ver. 13. for that is the great enemy to virtue, and inlet to vice; that defiles and debaucheth the mind, stupifies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction more than any thing else. This tempter is here described to be, (1.) Very ignorant; *she is simple and knows nothing*, i. e. she has no sufficient, solid reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul, she works out all the knowledge of holy things; they are lost and forgotten. *Iforedom and wine, and new wine take away the heart*; they besot men, and make fools of them. (2.) Very importunate; the less she has to offer that is rational, the more violent and pressing she is, and carries the day many a time by dint of impudence; *she is clamorous and noisy*, ver. 13. continually haunting young people with her enticements. *She sits at the door of her house*, ver. 14. watching for a prey; not as Abraham at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good; *She sits on a seat (on a throne, so the word signifies) in the high places of the city*, as if she had authority to give law; and we were all debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; and as if she had reputation, and were in honour, and thought worthy of the high places of the city; and, perhaps, she gains upon many, more by pretending to be fashionable, than by pretending to be agreeable. Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world (saith she) give themselves a greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldst thou break so far as to be cramped by them? Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

2. Who are the tempted; young people that have been well educated; these she will triumph most in bringing the ruin of. Observe, 1. What their real character is; they are passengers that go right on their ways, ver. 15. that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue, and set out very hopefully and well; that seem determined and designed for good, and are not as that young man, (chap. vii. 8.) going the way to her house: Such as these she has a design upon, and lays snares for, and useth all her arts, all her charms to pervert them; if they go right on, and will not look towards her, she will call after them; so urgent are these temptations. 2. How she represents them; she calls them simple, and wanting understanding, and therefore courts them to her school, that they may be cured of the restraints and formalities of their religion. This is the method of the stage (which is too close an exposition of this paragraph) where the sober young man, that has been virtuously educated, is the fool in the play, and the plot is to make him seven times more a child of hell than his profane companions, under colour of polishing and refining him, and setting him up for a wit and a beau. What is justly charged upon sin and impiety, ver. 4. that it is folly, is here very unjustly retorted upon the ways of virtue; but the day will declare who are the fools.

3. What the temptation is, ver. 17. *Stolen waters are sweet*: It is water and bread; whereas Wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed, and the wine she has mingled; however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more than ordinary sweet and pleasant: for it is stolen water, and bread eaten in secret, with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited liss are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love; and dishonest gain preferred before that which is justly gotten. Now this argues, not only a bold contempt, but an impudent defiance, 1. Of God's law, in that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen, and come at by breaking through the hedge of the divine command. *Nititur in vitium*. The spirit of contradiction we have, by kind, from our first parents, who thought the forbidden tree of all others a tree to be desired. 2. Of God's curse: *The bread is eaten in secret*, for fear of discovery and punishment, and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions and triumphed over them, that notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin: and can make himself believe, that being eaten in secret, it shall never be discovered or reckoned, for sweetness and pleasantness is the bait, but by the tempter's own shewing, even that is so absurd, and hath such allays, that it is a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to reason.

4. An effectual antidote against the temptation in a few words, ver. 18. He that so far wanteth understanding as to be drawn aside by these enticements, he is led on ignorantly to his own inevitable ruin; he knows not, will not believe, doth not consider, the tempter will not let him know, that the dead are there; that those that live in pleasure are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins; terrors attend these pleasures like the terrors of death itself. The giants are there, *Rephaim*; this was it that ruined the sinners of the old world; the giants that were in the earth in these days. Her guests that are treated with these stolen waters, are not only in the highway to hell, and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, lashed by the terrors of their own consciences now and then, which are a hell upon earth. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell; remorseless sin is remediless ruin, it is the bottomless pit already. Thus doth Solomon shew the hook, those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

CHAP. X.

Hitherto we have been in the porch or preface to the proverbs, here they begin; they are short but weighty sentences; most of them are distichs, two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other; but it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses, much less any thread of discourse, and therefore in these chapters, we need not attempt to reduce the contents to their proper heads, the several sentences will appear best in their own places; The scope of them all is to set before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Many of the proverbs in this chapter relate to the good government of the tongue, without which men's religion is vain.

1 THE proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the

good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason, 1. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or if not they will have for their support under their heaviness, that they have done their duty, have done their endeavour. 2. Why children should carry themselves wisely and well, and live up to their good education, that they may rejoice the hearts of their parents, and not sadden them. Observe, (1.) It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet, that thereby they do something towards recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, when they most need it; and it is the duty of parents to rejoice in their children's wisdom and well doing, yea though it arrive to such an eminency as to eclipse them. (2.) It adds to the guilt of those that carry themselves ill, that thereby they grieve those whom they ought to be a joy to, and are a heaviness, particularly to their poor mothers that bore them with sorrow, but with greater sorrow to see them wicked and vile.

2. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. 3. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

These two verses speak to the same purpose, and the latter may be the reason of the former.

1. That wealth which men get unjustly, will do them no good because God will blast it. *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing*, ver. 2. not the treasures of wicked people; much less the treasures which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked arts, by oppression or fraud; though, it be never so much, as a treasure, and laid up never so safe, though it be hid treasure, yet it profits nothing; when profit and loss come to be balanced the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the loss sustained by the wickedness, Matt. xvi. 26. They do not profit the soul, they will not purchase any true comfort or happiness; they will stand a man in no stead at death, or in the judgment of the great day; and the reason is, because God casteth away the substance of the wicked, ver. 3. he takes that from them which they have unjustly gotten, he rejects the consideration of it, not regarding the rich more than the poor. We often see that scattered by the justice of God, which has been gathered together by the injustice of men. How can the treasures of wickedness profit, when, though it be counted substance, God casts it away, and it vanisheth as a shadow?

2. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. *Righteousness delivers from death*, i. e. wealth gained and kept, and used in a right matter, (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity) it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep us alive, and be a defence to us; it will deliver from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness; it will profit to that degree, as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it: For the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish, ver. 3. and so their righteousness delivers from death, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life and livelihood and which will keep them alive in famine. The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when young lions shall lack and suffer hunger.

4. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told, 1. Who they are that, though rich, are in a fair way to become poor; those that deal with a slack hand, that are careless and remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their bones to their work, or stick to it; that deal with a deceitful hand, so it may be read; those that think to enrich themselves by fraud and trucking, will in the end impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God, on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those that deal with flight of hand, and are honest only with good looking to. 2. Who they are that, though poor, are in a fair way to become rich; those that are diligent, and honest, that are careful about their affairs, and what their hands find to do, do it with all their might, in a fair and honourable way, those are likely to increase what they have. The hand of the acute, so some; of those that are sharp, but not sharpers; the hand of the active, so others: the stirring hand gets a penny. This is true in the affairs of our souls, as well as in our worldly affairs; slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty; but those that are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith, and rich in good works.

5. He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame.

Here is, 1. The just praise of those that improve their opportunities, that take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body; that provide for hereafter, while provision is to be made; that gather in summer, which is gathering time; he that doth so is a wise son, and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom, if there be occasion, he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family and his education.

2. The just reproach and blame of those that trifle away their opportunities; He that sleeps, loves his ease, idles away his time, and neglects his work, especially, that sleeps in harvest, when he should be laying in for winter, that lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have occasion for, he is a son that causeth shame; for he is a foolish son, he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He that gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth, gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of it; but he that idles away the days of his youth, will bear the shame of it when he is old.

6. Blessings are upon the head of the just; but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is, The head of the just is crowned with blessings; with the blessings both of God and man; variety of blessings, abundance of blessings shall descend from above, and visibly abide on the head of good men; real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them, and as a helmet to protect and secure them.

2. The mouth of the wicked covered with violence; their mouth shall be kept

Rept with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves. *Job v. 16.* their breath shall be Rept with violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die; between their bodies in the grave there is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other in the world of spirits there is a vast difference; and so there is, or ought to be, between their memories that survive them.

1. Good men are, and ought to be, well spoken of when they are gone; it is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories. 1. It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those that excel in virtue, and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead; their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then in a special manner as *precious ointment*, *Eccles. vii. 1.* Those that honour God, he will thus honour, *Psal. cxii. 3—6—9.* The elders by faith obtained a good report, *Heb. xi. 2.* and being dead, are yet spoken of. 2. It is part of the duty of the survivors. Let the memory of the just be blessed, so the Jews read it; and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead, but they add, *Let his memory be blessed.* We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone; bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them; and especially be followers of them in that which is good.

2. Bad men are and shall be forgotten, or spoken of with contempt. When their bodies are putrifying in the grave, their names also shall rot: Either they shall not be preserved at all, but buried in oblivion: no good can be said of them, and therefore the greatest kindness that can be done them, will be to say nothing of them; or they shall be loathsome, and mentioned with detestation, and that rule of honour *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, will not protect them, where their wickedness has been notorious, and cannot but be mentioned, it ought to be mentioned with abhorrence.

8. The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Here is, 1. The honour and happiness of the obedient; they will receive commandments; they will take it as a privilege, and really an ease to them to be under government, which saves them the labour of deliberating, and choosing for themselves; and they will take it as a favour to be told their duty, and admonished concerning it. And it is their wisdom, they are wise in heart that are tractable, and those who thus bend, thus stoop, they shall stand and be established, shall prosper, being well advised.

2. The shame and ruin of the disobedient, that will not be governed, nor endure any yoke; that will not be taught, nor take any advice: They are fools, for they act against themselves and their own interest; they are commonly *prating fools*, fools of lips full of talk, but full of nonsense; boasting of themselves, prating spitefully against those that admonish them. 3. *John 10.* and are pretending to give counsel and law to others. Of all fools, none more troublesome than the *prating fools*; nor that more expose themselves: but they shall fall into sin, into hell, because they received no commandments. They that are full of tongue seldom look well to their feet, and therefore stumble and fall.

9. He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

We are told, and we may depend upon it.

1. That men's integrity will be their security. *He that walketh uprightly* towards God and man, is faithful to both, that designs as he ought, and means as he saith, he *walketh surely*, i. e. he is safe under divine protection, and easy in a holy security: he goes on his way with an humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and *great peace*, *Isa. xxxiii. 17. xxxiii. 15, 16.* Some understand it as part of the character of an upright man, that he *walks surely*, in opposition to walking at all adventures; he will not dare to do that which he is not fully satisfied in his own conscience concerning the lawfulness of, but will let his way clear in every thing.

2. That men's dishonesty will be their shame. *He that perverteth his way*, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissembles with God and man, looks one way and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, he shall be known to be what he is; it is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself: however, God will discover him in the great day. *He that perverteth his ways*, *documenta erit, shall be made an example of, for warning to others*, so some.

10. He that winketh with the eye, causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fail.

Mischief is here said to attend,

1. Politic, designing, self-disguising sinners: *He that winketh with the eye*, as if he took notice of you, when at the same time he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn; that makes signs to his accomplices when to come in to assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice, he *causeth sorrow* both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent or do worse; either rule it, or be ruined by it.

2. Public, silly, self-exposing sinners, *prating fools*, whose sins go before unto judgment, they shall fail, as he had said before, *ver. 8.* But this case is less dangerous of the two, and though he destroys himself, doth not create so much sorrow to others, as he that winks with his eyes. The dog that bites, is not always the dog that barks.

11. The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here, 1. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness to do good with it: *His mouth*, the outlet of his mind, *is a well of life*, it is a constant spring, from whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground and make it fruitful; and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the

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weary traveller: it is like a well of life that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddled with any corrupt communication.

2. How industrious a bad man is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it. *The mouth of the wicked covers violence*; disguiseth the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually; as Joab killed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin to which the punishment answers, *ver. 6.* *Violence covers the mouth of the wicked*: what he got by violence, shall by violence be taken from him, *Job v. 4, 5.*

12. Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Here is, 1. The great mischief-maker, and that is malice; even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet *hatred* seeks occasion, and so *stirs it up*, and doth the devil's work. Those are the most spiteful, ill-natured people that can be, who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmises, and misrepresentations; blowing up the sparks of contention which had laid buried, into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

2. The great peace-maker, and that is love, which covereth all sins, i. e. the offences among relations, which occasion discord: Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake, and unadvisedly, when we are able to say there was no ill intended, but it was an oversight, and we love our friend notwithstanding, this covers it. It will also overlook the offence that is given us, and so cover it, and make the best of it: by this means strife is prevented, or, if begun, peace is recovered and restored presently. The apostle quotes this, *1 Pet. iv. 8.* *Love will cover a multitude of sins.*

13. In the lips of him that hath understanding, wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe, 1. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men. *He that hath understanding*, that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, *wisdom is found in his lips*, i. e. it is discovered to be there, and consequently that he hath within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others: and it is a man's honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise.

2. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men: *A rod is for the back of him that wants a heart*; he exposes himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. They that foolishly and wilfully go on in wicked ways are preparing rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14. Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Observe, 1. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation. *Wisdom is therefore found in their lips*, (*ver. 13.*) because it is laid up in their hearts; out of which store like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge, may be at any time useful to us, we must lay it up, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it: We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure lay it up safe, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

2. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They love devouring words, *Psal. lii. 4.* and these come uppermost; their *mouth is near destruction*, having the sharp arrows of bitter words always at hand to throw about.

15. The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

This may be taken two ways:

1. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking, dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which they have that are beforehand in the world: Taking pains is really the way to make ourselves and our families easy: Or, rather,

2. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition.

(1.) Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake. *The rich man's wealth is*, in his own conceit, *his strong city*, whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from: It will prove, they are not so safe as they imagine; nay, their wealth may perhaps expose them.

(2.) Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake: *The destruction of the poor is their poverty*; it links their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16. The labour of the righteous tendeth to life; the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said, *Psal. xxxvii. 16.* *That a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.*

1. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for; he eats only the labour of his hands, but that labour tendeth to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live and maintain his family: Nor doth it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others, he therefore labours that he may have to give, *Eph. iv. 28.* All his business turns to some good account or other. Or, it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which hath a tendency to eternal life, *soareth to the spirit*, that he may reap life everlasting.

2. Perhaps a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by, but it tends to sin; he makes it the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride and luxury; he doth hurt with it and not good; he gets hurt by it, and is hardened by it in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as they are that have them.

17. He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction : but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

See here, 1. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it ; that do not let it slip through carelessness as the most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it ; that keep instruction safe, keep it pure and intire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it ; keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them, they that do so are *in the way of life* : the way that has true comfort in it, and eternal life at the end of it.

2. That those are in the wrong, that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them ; they will not be taught their duty, because it discovers their faults to them ; that instruction which carries reproof in it, they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they err ; it is a sign they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil ; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and shewed the right way ; must needs err still, err endlessly ; he certainly misfeeth *the way of life*.

18. He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth slander, is a fool.

Observe here, that malice is folly and wickedness.

1. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation. He is a fool ; though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest if it break out he should be ashamed before men, and he should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them, when they are made a cloak of maliciousness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God.

2. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language. He that utters slander is a fool too, for God will sooner or later bring forth that righteousness as the light which he endeavours to cloud, and will find an expedient to roll the reproach away.

19. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin ; but he that refrainerth his lips is wise.

We are here admonished concerning the government of the tongue, that necessary duty of a Christian.

1. It is good to say little, because in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, or sin doth not cease. It is seldom but they that speak much, speak amiss ; and among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they may shortly give an account of. They that love to hear themselves talk, do not consider what work they are making for repentance ; for that will be wanted, and at first or last will be had, where there wanteth not sin.

2. It is therefore good to keep our mouths as with a bridle : He that refrainerth his lips, that checks himself many a time, suppresseth what he has thought, and holds in that which would out, he is a wise man ; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace. Little said is soon amended. Amos v. 13. James i. 19.

20. The tongue of the just is as choice silver : the heart of the wicked is little worth. 21. The lips of the righteous feed many : but fools die for want of wisdom.

We are here taught how to value men ; not by their wealth and preferment in the world, but by their virtue.

1. Good men are good for something ; though they may be poor and low in the world, and may not have power and riches to do good with, yet as long as they have a mouth to speak, that will make them valuable and useful, and upon that account we must honour them that fear the Lord, because out of the good treasure of their heart they bring forth good things. 1. This makes them valuable : The tongue of the just is as choice silver, i. e. they are sincere, freed from the dross of guile and evil design : God's words are compared to silver purified, Psalm xii. 7. for they may be relied on ; and such are the words of just men. They are of weight and worth, and will enrich those that hear them with wisdom that is better than choice silver, 2. It makes them useful : The lips of the righteous feed many, for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life ; and that sound doctrine wherewith souls are nourished up. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy, to the hungry.

2. Bad men are good for nothing. 1. One can get no good by them ; The heart of the wicked is little worth ; and therefore that which comes out of the abundance of his heart cannot be worth much. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all the things that fill him, and affect him, are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value : He that is of the earth speaks of the earth, and neither understands nor relisheth the things of God, John iii. 31. 1 Cor. ii. 14. The wicked man pretends, that though he doth not talk of religion as the just do, yet he has it within him, and thanks God his heart is good ; but he that searcheth the heart here faith the contrary, it is nothing worth. 2. One can do no good upon them. While many are fed by the lips of the righteous, fools die for want of wisdom ; and fools indeed they are to die for want of that which they might so easily come by. Fools die for want of a heart, so the word is ; they perish for want of consideration and resolution ; they have no heart to do any thing for their own good : While the righteous feed others, fools starve themselves.

22. The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and headdeth no sorrow with it.

Worldly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake both in the nature of the thing they desire, and in the way by which they hope to compass it : We are therefore told here,

1. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable ; not having abundance only, but having it, and no sorrow with it : no disquieting care to get and keep it, no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it ; no tormenting grief for the loss of it, no guilt contracted by the abuse of it : To have it, and to have a heart to take the comfort of it ; to do good with it, and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it.

2. Whence this desirable wealth is to be expected ; not by making ourselves drudges to the world, Psalm cxxxvii. 2. but by the blessing of God, that is it that makes rich, and adds no sorrow ; what comes from the love of God, the grace of God comes along with it, to preserve the soul from those

turbulent lusts and passions, which otherwise the increase of riches is commonly the incentive of. He had said, ver. 4. The hand of the diligent maketh rich, as a means ; but here he ascribes it to the blessing of the Lord ; but that blessing is upon the hand of the diligent. It is thus in spiritual riches : Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, Deut. viii. 17, 18.

23. It is a sport to a fool to do mischief : but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Here is, 1. Sin exceeding sinful. It is a laughter to a fool to do mischief ; it is as natural to him and as pleasant, as it is to a man to laugh : Wickedness is his Isaac, that is the word here : it is his delight, his darling, and that in which he pleaseth himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin : when he is warned not to sin, from the consideration of the law of God, and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear ; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it, ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the conviction of his own conscience, Prov. xiv. 9.

2. Wisdom is exceeding wise : for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency ; it may be predicated of itself, and it is encomium enough ; you need say no more in praise of a man of understanding but that he is an understanding man, he hath wisdom, he is so wise as not to do mischief, or if he has through oversight offended, he is so wise as not to make a jest of it. Or, to speak wisdom wise indeed, read it thus : As it is a sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom, and to show it. Besides the future recompence, a good man hath as much present pleasure in the restraints and exercises of religion, as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyments of sin ; and much more and much better.

24. The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him : but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. 25. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more : but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

It is here said, and said again to the righteous, that it shall be well with them ; and to the wicked, woe to them ; and these are set the one over against the other, for their mutual illustration.

1. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they can fear, and as well with the righteous as they can desire. (1.) The wicked, it is true, buoy themselves up sometimes in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and those fears shall come upon them, the God they provoke will be every whit as terrible as they, when they are under their greatest damps, apprehend him to be : As is thy fear, so is thy wrath, Psalm xc. 11. Wicked men fear the punishment of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnest of their future torments. (2.) The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is towards the favour of God, and a happiness in him, and that desire shall be granted : According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be unto them, Psalm xxxvii. 4.

2. The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end, but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, ver. 25. The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others like a whirlwind, which threatens to bear down all before it ; but, like a whirlwind, they are presently gone, and irrecoverably they pass, they are no more, all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, Psalm xxxvii. 10, 26. Job xx. 15. The righteous on the contrary make no show ; they lie hid, like a foundation which is low and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to cleave to God, established in virtue, and they shall be an everlasting foundation, immovably good ; he that is holy shall be holy still, and immovably happy, his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, Matth. xii. 24. The righteous is the pillar of the world, so some read it, the world stands for their sakes ; the holy seed is the substance thereof.

26. As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

Observe, 1. Those that are of a slothful, lazy disposition, that love their ease, and cannot apply their minds to any business, are not fit to be employed, no not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care, nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers ; he will not own the sending forth sluggards into his harvest. 2. They that are guilty of so great an oversight as to intrust such with any affair, and put confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes : he provokes his passion as vinegar sets the teeth on edge, and occasions him grief to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27. The fear of the LORD prolongeth days : but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. 28. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness : but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Observe, 1. Religion lengthens men's lives and crowns their hopes : What is man that he loves life ? let him fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world, and eternal life in the other, the fear of the LORD will add days more than was expected, will add them endlessly, will prolong them to the days of eternity ; What man is he that would see good days ? let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many, but happy, very happy as well as very many, for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, they shall have what they hope for, to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is something future and unseen that they place their happiness in, Rom. viii. 21. 25. not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope, will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

2. Wickedness shortens men's lives, and frustrates their hopes ; the years of the wicked that are spent in the pleasures of sin, and the drudgery of the world shall be shortened ; cut down the trees that cumber the ground. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promiseth himself in this world or the other, he will be frustrated ; for the expectation of the wicked shall perish : his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29. The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity. 30. The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

These two verses are to the same purpose with those next before, speaking the happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked; it is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loth are we to believe and consider it.

1. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity: *The way of the Lord*, i. e. the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us, is *strength to the upright*, i. e. confirms him in his uprightness: all God's dealings with him, merciful and afflictive, serve to quicken him to his duty, and animate him against his discouragements. Or, *The way of the Lord*, i. e. the way of godliness in which he appoints us to walk, is *strength to the upright*, i. e. the closer we keep to that way, and the more our hearts are enlarged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings: a good conscience kept pure from sin, gives a man boldness in a dangerous time; and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time; the more we do for God, the more we may do, *Job xvii. 9*. That joy of the Lord, which is to be found only in the way of the Lord, will be our strength, *Neh. viii. 10*, and therefore *the righteous shall never be removed*. They that have an established virtue, have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of, they have an everlasting foundation, *ver. 25*.

2. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequence of wickedness. The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth; God's judgments will root them out. Destruction, swift and sure destruction *shall be to the workers of iniquity*, destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord which is the strength of the upright, is contrition, consumption and terror to the workers of iniquity: the same gospel which to the one is a *favour of life unto life*, to the other is a *favour of death unto death*; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one, and hardens the other, *Hos. xiv. 2*.

31. The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. 32. The lips of the righteous shall know what is acceptable; but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and accordingly are justified or condemned by their words, *Matth. xii. 37*.

1. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness, that he speaks wisely and well. A good man in his discourse brings forth wisdom, for the benefit of others: God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness, *Eccles. ii. 26*, and he, in gratitude of that gift and justice to the giver, doth good with it, and with his wife and pious discourses edifies many. He knows what is acceptable, what discourse will be pleasing to God, for that is it that he studies at more than to oblige the company, and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers; what will become him and benefit them, and that he will speak.

2. It is the sin, and will be the ruin of the wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. *The mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness*, that which is displeasing to God, and provoking to those he conversed with: and what comes of it? why, the froward tongue shall be cut out, as sure as the flattering one, *Psal. xii. 3*.

CHAP. XI.

1. A False balance is an abomination to the LORD; but a just weight is his delight.

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness; he is not an honest man that is not devout: so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotion should be accepted: for,

1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce: A false balance is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an abomination to the Lord, and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such cursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and while it passeth undiscovered, they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, *Hos. xii. 7, 8*. But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that defraud their brethren.

2. Nothing more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him; a just weight is his delight. He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2. When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Observe, (1.) How he that exalted himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him: *When pride cometh, then cometh shame*, i. e. Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on, and look upon with disdain; he that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain glory; for God resists the proud, contradicts them and counterworks them, in that thing they are proud of, *Isa. ii. 11*, &c.

(2.) How he that humbleth himself is here exalted, and a high character given him; as with the proud there is folly and will be shame, so with the lowly there is wisdom, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect, and makes his face to shine before men; or if any be so base as to tempt upon the humble, God will give them grace, which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, they are that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God, and comfort in themselves; we will say, that with the lowly is wisdom.

3. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threatened that he will destroy the transgressors, but that we may be the more fully assured of both, it is here represented as the nature of the thing were such on both sides, that it would do itself.

1. The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide, in the way of duty, and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tack about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at, but keep a good conscience. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, *Psal. xxv. 21*.

2. The iniquity of an ill man will itself be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection, though he is never so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think themselves never so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, *Prov. v. 22*.

Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivered from death.

Note, 1. The day of death will be a day of wrath, it is a messenger of God's wrath, therefore when Moses had mediated on man's mortality, he takes occasion from thence to admire the power of God's anger, *Psal. xc. 11*. It is not a debt owing to nature, but to God's justice. After death the judgment, and that is a day of wrath, *Rev. vi. 17*.

2. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day; they will neither put by the stroke nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's brightness be of then? In the day of public judgments, riches expose men many times rather than protect them, *Ezek. vii. 19*.

3. It is righteousness only that will deliver from the evil of death; a good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it; it is the privilege of the righteous only, not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

6. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

These two verses are in effect the same, and both to the same purpose with ver. 3. For the truths are here to such certainty and weight, that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

1. That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be, (1.) Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case, to say to us, *This is the way, walk in it*. He that acts without a guide looks right on, and sees his way before him. (2.) Our best deliverance from every false way: The righteousness of the upright shall be an arm of proof to them, to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

2. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive. The wicked shall fall into misery and ruin by their own wickedness, and be taken in their own naughtiness: in a score; O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Their sin will be their punishment; that very thing by which they contrived to snare themselves, will make against them.

7. When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

Note, 1. Even wicked men while they live may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his home, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web; the worldling expects great matters from his wealth, he calls it goods laid up for many years, and hopes to take his ease in it, and to be merry; but in death their expectation will be frustrated, the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in, and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, *Job xxvii. 8*.

2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people, that their hopes will sink into despair then when they expect them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish, but when a wicked man dies his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces, in that very day his thoughts perish, with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

As always in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured and the wicked crossed.

1. Good people are helped out of their distresses which they thought themselves lost in and their feet set in a large room, *Psal. lxxvi. 12*.—xxxiv. 19. God has found out a way to deliver his people then when they have despaired, and their enemies have triumphed as if the wilderness had shut them in.

2. The wicked have fallen into the same distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison, and their persecutors come in their stead. Israel is delivered out of the red sea, and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the saints in God's eye, that he gives men for them, *Isa. xliii. 3, 4*.

9. An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered:

Here is, 1. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but the hypocrite with his mouth, that destroys his neighbour, decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and good will. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue.

2. Honestly defeating the design, and escaping the snare; through knowledge of the devices of Satan shall the just be delivered from the snares which the hypocrite hath laid for him; seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, *Rom. xvi. 18, 19*.

10. When

10. When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, *there is shouting*. 11. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

It is here observed,

1. That good men are generally well beloved by their neighbours, but nobody cares for wicked people. (2.) It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good word for a good man; and therefore *when it goes well with the righteous*, when they are advanced, and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and *the city rejoiceth*. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation. (2.) Wicked people may, perhaps, here and there have a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will, they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore *when they perish there is shouting*, every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wished never greater loss come to the town, the rather because they hope *the righteous may come in their stead*, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, ver. 8. Let a loss of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, Job xxvii. 23. Psal. lii. 6.

2. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but (as faith the proverb of the ancients) *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*. (1.) Good men are public blessings. *Vir bonus est commune bonum*. By the blessing of the upright, the blessings with which they are blessed, which enlarge their sphere of usefulness, by the blessings with which they bless their neighbours, their advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interest, by the blessings with which God blessed others for their sake; by these *the city is exalted*, and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours. (2.) Wicked men are public nuisances; not only the burdens, but plagues of their generation; the city is *overthrown by the mouth of the wicked*, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgments of God upon it.

12. He that is void of wisdom, despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace: 13. A tale-bearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence, 1. Of wisdom: *a man of understanding* that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked *holdeth his peace*, that he neither give vent to his passion, nor kindle the passion of others, by any opprobrious language or peevish reflections. 2. Of sincerity. *He that is of a faithful spirit*, that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, he *concealeth every matter*, which if divulged may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very ill vices of the tongue: 1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face. *He that is void of wisdom* discovers his folly by this, he *despiseth his neighbour*, calls him *raca*, and thou fool, upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He under-values himself, who thus under-values one that is made of the same mould. 2. Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back. A *tale-bearer* that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief and so discord, he *revealeth secrets* which he hath been intrusted with; and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges of friendship and conversation.

14. Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is safety*.

Here is, 1. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin: *Where no counsel is*, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, *the people fall*, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Counsels of war necessary to the operations of war; two eyes see more than one; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance.

2. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity: *In the multitude of counsellors*, that see their need of one another, and act in concert, and with concern for the public welfare, *there is safety*; for what prudent methods one discerns not, another may. In our private affairs, we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many, if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear: if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15. He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship, is sure.

Here we are taught,

1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will, he that gave them to us has reserved himself a power to direct us how we shall use them, for they are not our own, we are but stewards; and farther, that God in his law consults our interests, and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry, that is, good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs, which is part of the character of a good man, Psalm cxii. 5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.

2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretyship; (1.) Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone. *He that is surety for a stranger*, for any one that asks him, and promisseth him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he *shall smart for it*, *contritione conteritur*, he shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it, and perhaps become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it; it pleased the Lord to bruise him. (2.) Because he that resolves against all such suretyship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

16. A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

Here, 1. It is allowed that *strong men retain riches*, that those who baffle in the world, that are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all that stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have, and to get more; while those that are weak are preyed upon by all about them.

2. It is taken for granted, that a *gracious woman* is as solicitous to preserve her reputation for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women that are truly gracious will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct, *A gracious woman* is as honourable as a valiant man, and her honour is as sure.

17. The merciful man doth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel, troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, Every one for himself; *Proximus egomet mihi*; Now if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves, and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are or are not governed by religious principles.

1. A *merciful*, tender, good-humoured man, *doth good to his own soul*, makes and keeps himself easy; he hath the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as *his own soul*: for we are members one of another. He that waters others with his temporal good things, God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which he will find to do the best good to his own soul. See Isa. lviii. 7, &c. *If thou hide not thine eyes from thine own flesh*, but doest good to others, as to thyself; if thou doest good with thy own soul, and draw that out to the hungry, thou doest good to thy own soul; for the Lord shall *satisfy thy soul*, and *make fat thy bones*. Some make it part of the character of a *merciful man*, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others, will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient, and to *enjoy the good of all his labour*. We may by the soul understand the inward man, as the apostle calls it, and then it teaches us, that the first and great act of mercy, is to provide well for our own souls the necessary supports of spiritual life.

2. A *cruel*, froward, ill-natured man, *troubleth his own flesh*, and so his sin becomes his punishment; he starves and dies for want of what he hath, because he has not a heart to use it, either for others good or for his own. He is vexations to his nearest relations, that are and should be to him as his own flesh, Eph. v. 29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones, and the consumption of the flesh.

18. The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness, *shall be a sure reward*.

Note, 1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves. *The wicked worketh a deceitful work*, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes; promisseth himself that by his sin which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. *Sin deceived me, and by it flew me*.

2. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves; he that *sows righteousness*, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, he shall have a *sure reward*; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, Gal. vi. 8.

19. As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil, *purjueth it* to his own death.

It is here shewed that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness in its own nature has a direct tendency to life, and wickedness to death.

1. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. *Righteousness* inclines, disposeth, and leads the soul to life.

2. In like manner, they that indulge themselves in sin, are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits, the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber, and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20. They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but *such as are upright in their way, are his delight*.

It concerns us to know what God hates and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly; may avoid his displeasure, and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told,

1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for that is signified by the word which we translate frowardness, pretending justice, but intending wrong; walking in crooked ways to avoid discovery. Those are of a *froward heart*, who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, an *abomination of the Lord*, Isa. lxv. 5.

2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain dealing: *Such as are upright in their way*, that aim and act with integrity: that have their conversation in the world in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with *fleshy wisdom*; these God delights in, these he even boasts of; *Hast thou considered my servant Job?* and will have us to admire; *Behold an Israelite indeed*.

21. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners. *Though hand join in hand*, though they may be many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice; though they are in league for the support and propagation of it; though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade in defiance of religion, yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God, they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say, they did as the most did, and as their company

company did; they *shall not be unpunished*, witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number and strength, and unanimity in sin, will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blest. *The seed of the righteous*, that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, yet in due time, *shall be delivered*. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes *the seed of the righteous*, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

22. As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unpotted virtue; so that a woman without discretion, is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

1. It is taken for granted here, that beauty and comeliness of body is as a jewel of gold, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament: *Gratiores est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus*. But that a foolish wanton woman of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine; though she be never so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience is defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

3. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it, and ill bestowed upon them: it is quite misplaced, as a jewel in a swine's snout, with which he routs in the dunghill; if beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments; it is pity those should have them that have no discretion to use them well.

23. The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

This tells us what the desire and expectation of the righteous, and of the wicked, is, and how it will prove; what they would have and what they shall have.

1. The righteous would have good, only good; all they desire is, that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God; and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have; that good which they desire, *Psal. xxvii. 4.*

2. The wicked would have wrath, they desire the woeful day, that God's judgment may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and wrath they shall have, so shall their doom be; they expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves, as they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

Note, 1. It is possible a man may grow rich, by a prudent spending of what he has; may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase, nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerfully using what we have, our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do; by minding which closely, what we have is increased, it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God: he blisseth the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, *2 Cor. ix. 10. Give, and it shall be given you.*

2. It is possible a man may grow poor, by a paltry sparing of what he has, withholding more than is meet, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods; this tends to poverty; it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, loses their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God; and let men be never so saving of what they have, if God blast it and blow upon it, it comes to nothing; a fire not blown shall consume it, *Hag. i. 6, 9.*

25. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us, how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, *ver. 17.*

1. We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms; the liberal soul, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted, and provides for them; that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands; that soul shall be made fat with pleasure, and enriched with more grace.

2. We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man: He that watereth others with the streams of his bounty, shall be also watered himself; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers of his blessings, which he will pour out till there be not room enough to receive it, *Mal. iii. 10.* Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the merciful shall find mercy, and the kind be kindly dealt with.

3. We shall be enabled still to do more good: He that watereth, even he shall be as rain, so some read it; he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be farther useful and acceptable, as the rain to the new-mown grass. He that teacheth shall learn, so the Chaldees read it; he that useth his knowledge in teaching others shall himself be taught of God; to him that hath, and useth what he hath, more shall be given.

26. He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him: but blessings shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

See here, 1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them: It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor

suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market price, to be content with moderate profit, and not to aim to make a gain of God's judgments: It is a noble and extensive piece of charity, for those that have stores wherewithal to do it, to help to keep the markets low then when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people; we are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them, and to court their blessings, and be at some expence to purchase them. Sometimes *vox populi is vox Dei.*

27. He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, 1. Those that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved both with God and man. He that riseth early to that which is good, so the word is, that seeks opportunities of serving his friends and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, he procureth favour; all about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness: and which is better than that, better than life, he hath God's loving kindness.

2. Those that are industrious to do mischief, are preparing ruin for themselves, it shall come unto them; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, seeking mischief is here set in opposition to seeking good; for those that are not doing good, are doing hurt.

28. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, 1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need: he that trusteth them, as if they would secure him in the favour of God, and be his protection and portion, he shall fall, as a man that lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him.

2. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us: The righteous shall then flourish as a branch, the branch of righteousness; like a tree, whose leaf shall not wither, *Psal. i. 3.* Even in death, when riches shall fail men, the bones of the righteous shall flourish as an herb, *Isa. lxvi. 14.* When those that take root in the world wither, those that are grafted into Christ, and partake of his root and fatness, shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29. He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

Two extremes in the management of family affairs are here condemned, and the ill consequences of them foretold.

1. Carefulness and carnal policy on the one hand. There are those that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their carcking about their business, and fretting about their losses; their strictness with their servants, and their niggardness towards their families, trouble their own houses, and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either get or save by it: but they will both be disappointed; they will inherit the wind: All they will get by these arts, will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

Carelessness and want of common prudence on the other hand. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not, or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance or consideration, he not only loseth his reputation and interest, but becomes a servant to the wise of heart; he is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and, very fit, that the fool should be servant to the wise of heart, and, upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools, and he is infinitely wise.

30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

This shews what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued.

1. The righteous are as trees of life, the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of Paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

2. The wise are something more, they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to turn many to righteousness, and that is the same with winning souls here, *Dan. xii. 3.* Abraham's profelytes are called the souls that he had gotten, *Gen. xii. 5.* They that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and they that do win souls shew that they are wise.

31. Behold! the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the finner.

This I think is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, *Behold!* which intimates, that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered.

1. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure; the righteous, if they do amiss shall be punished for their offences in this world, much more shall wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly? *1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Luke xlii. 31.*

2. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences *in the earth*, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that, *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, Psalm lvi. 11. but they are not universal; many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which proves that there is a judgment to come, and there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times *the righteous are recompensed* for their righteousness here *in the earth*, though it is not the principal, much less the only reward, either intended for them, or intended by them; but whatever the word of God hath promised them, as the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have *in the earth*. *The wicked also, and the sinner*, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life; nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous who do not deserve the least reward, yet have a part of their recompense here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore *stand in awe and fear not*. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall they have two hells that merit both.

C H A P. XII.

1. **W**HOSO loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.

We are here taught to try whether we have grace or no, by inquiring how we stand affected to the means of grace.

1. Those that have grace, and love it, will delight in all the instructions that are given them by way of counsel, admonition and reproof, by the word or providence of God; will value a good education, and think it not a hardship, but a happiness, to be under a strict and prudent discipline. They that love a faithful ministry, that value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear they *love knowledge*.

2. Those shew themselves not only void of grace, but void of common sense, that take it as an affront to be told their faults, and an imposition upon their liberty to be put in mind of their duty. *He that hateth reproof* is not only foolish, but *brutish*; like the horse and the mule, that have no understanding; or the ox that kicks against the goad. Those that desire to live in loose families and societies, where they may be under no check; that dislike the convictions of their own consciences, and count those their enemies that tell them the truth, are the *brutish* here meant.

2. A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD; but a man of wicked devices will be condemn.

Note, 1. We are really as we were with God. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that obtain favour of the Lord, though the world frown upon them, and they find little favour with men: for in God's favour is life, and that is the fountain of all good. On the other hand, those are miserable whom he condemns; however men may applaud them, and and cry them up; whom he condemns, he condemns to the second death.

1. We are with God, as we are with men, as we have our conversation in this world: our Father judges of his children very much by their carriage one to another: and therefore a good man that is merciful and charitable, and doth good, he draws out favour from the Lord, by his prayers; but a malicious man, that deviseth wickedness against his neighbours, he will condemn, as unworthy of a place in his kingdom.

3. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Note, 1. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves; though they may get broad estates, they cannot get long ones: *A man shall not be established by wickedness*; it may set them in high places, but they are slippery places, Psalm lxxiii. 18. That prosperity which is raised by sin, is built on the sand, and so it will soon appear.

2. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last; and what is honestly got will wear well. *The root of the righteous shall not be moved*, though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ, are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness is so rooted, as never to be rooted up.

4. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed, is as rottenness in his bones.

Note, 1. He that is blessed with a good wife, is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. *A virtuous woman*, that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious: that is active for the good of her family, and looks well to the ways of her household; that makes conscience of her duty, in every relation; a woman of spirit that can bear crosses without disturbance; such a one owns her husband for her head, and therefore she is a crown to him; not only a credit and an honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him, and thereby teaches his children and servants to be so too.

2. He that is plagued with an ill wife, is as miserable as if he were upon the dung-hill; for she is no better than rottenness in his bones, an incurable disease: besides that *she maketh him ashamed*. She that is silly and foolish, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill-tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband; if he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's faults turn to his reproach; if he retire into himself, his heart is sunk, he is continually uneasy: it is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5. The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

Note, 1. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judgeth them: we mistake, if we imagine that thoughts are free; no, they are under the divine cognizance, and therefore under the divine command. 2. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them; for they are the first born of the soul, that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked, than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man

may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he hath not indulged them and harboured them till they are ripened in to ill projects and resolutions.

3. It is a man's honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced, or mis-timed, or, at least, mis-interpreted; but it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design; not only with a long reach, but with an over-reach.

6. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse, the thoughts of the wicked and righteous were compared; here their words, and those are as the abundance of the heart is.

1. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours, and wicked indeed those are whose words are to lie in wait for blood, their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men whom they hate and persecute. See an instance, Luke xx. 20, 21.

2. Good men speak help to their neighbours. The mouth of the upright is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed, Prov. xxxi. 8. to plead for them, to witness for them, and so to deliver them, particularly them whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7. The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught as before, ver. 3. and chap. x. 25—30.

1. That the triumphing of the wicked is short: they may be exalted for a while; but in a little time they are overthrown, and are not: their trouble proves their overthrow, and they who made a great show, disappear, and their place knows them no more. Turn the wicked, and they are not; they stand in such a slippery place, that the least touch of trouble brings them down: like the apples of Sodom, which look fair, but touch them, and they go to dust.

2. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom, and will endure. Death will remove them, but their house shall stand, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8. A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most have a mighty regard to, and stand much upon. Now it is certain,

1. The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the prudent conduct of life. A man shall be commended by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which we are sure is according to truth, not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtlety, but according to his wisdom, the honesty of his designs, and the prudent choice of means to compass them.

2. The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness, and an opposition to that which is good. He that is of a perverse heart, that turns aside to crooked ways, and goes on forwardly in them, he shall be despised; providence will bring him to poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him, as unworthy to be dealt with, and unfit to be trusted, and a blemish and a scandal to mankind.

9. He that is despised and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Note, 1. It is the folly of some that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state, as persons of quality, and yet want necessities at home; and if their debts were paid would not be worth a morsel of bread; nay, perhaps, pinch their bellies, to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds.

2. The condition and character of those is every way better, who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress, and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves not only necessities, but conveniences in their own houses; not only bread, but a servant to attend them, and take some of their work off their hands. They that contrive to live plentifully and comfortably at home, are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain it, whose hearts are unhumiliated when their condition is low.

10. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

See here, to how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature, under its greatest abatements, but he regardeth even the life of his beast, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to providence which preserveth man and beast. The beasts that are under our care, must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannized over. Balaam was checked for beating his ass: the law took care for oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men, that are not just to the brute creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them, evidence and confirm themselves in a habit of barbarity, and help to make the creation groan, Rom. viii. 22.

2. To how great a degree wicked men will be unmerciful; even his tender mercies are cruel, i. e. that natural compassion which is in him, as a man is lost, and by the power of corruption is turned into hard heartedness, even that which they will have to pass for compassion is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ the innocent, *I will chastise him and let him go*. Their pretended kindnesses are only a cover for intended cruelties.

11. He that tilleth his land, shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

Note, 1. It is men's wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood.

He that tills his land, of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his work, and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it (what needs that?) yet he shall be *satisfied with bread*, shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath hath this mercy in it, thou shalt eat bread, though it be in the sweat of thy face. Cain was denied this, *Gen. iv. 12*. Be busy, and that is the true way to be easy; keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands*.

It is men's folly to neglect their business, they are void of understanding that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions, and follow them in their ill courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burdensome to others; eating the bread out of other people's mouths.

12. The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

See here, 1. What is the care and aim of a wicked man, he would do mischief; he desires the net of evil men, O that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with; that I had but his art of over-reaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have a spite to, as effectually as he can; he desireth the strong hold or fortress of evil men, so some read it, to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him.

2. What is the care and aim of a good man; his root yieldeth fruit, and is his strength and stability, and that is it that he desires, to do good, and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself, the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others, and God's glory, *Rom. xiv. 6*.

13. The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, 1. the wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves: They are often snared by the transgressions of their lips, and their throats are cut with their own tongues, by speaking evil of dignities, they expose themselves to public justice, by giving ill language, they become obnoxious to private resentments, are fued for defamation, and actions on the case for words, are brought against them. Many a man has paid dear in this world for the transgression of his lips; and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, *Psal. lxxiv. 6*.

2. The righteous extricating themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour: The just shall come out of such troubles as the wicked throw themselves headlong into. It is intimated, that the just may, perhaps come into trouble; but though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, *Psal. xxxiv. 19*.

14. A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

We are here assured for our quickening to every good word and work,

1. That even good works will turn to a good account, *ver. 11*. A man shall be satisfied with good, i. e. he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfied by the fruit of his mouth, i. e. with the good he doth with his pious discourse and prudent advice. While we are teaching others, we may ourselves learn, and feed on that bread of life we break to others.

2. That good works, will be much more, abundantly rewarded. The recompence of a man's hands, for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God, and the good of his generation, shall be rendered unto him, and he shall reap as he hath sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice, God will render to every man according to his work, *Rom. ii. 6*.

15. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

See here, 1. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise; his way is right in his own eyes, he thinks he is in the right in every thing he doth, and therefore asks no advice, because he doth not apprehend he needs it, is confident he knows the way and cannot miss it, and therefore never enquires the way. The rule he goes by is to do that which is right in his own eyes, to walk in the way of his heart, *quicquid libet licet*; he is a fool that is governed by his eyes, and not by his conscience.

2. What is it that keeps a wise man from being a fool; he is willing to be advised, desires to have counsel given him, and hearkens to counsel, being diffident of his own judgment, and having a value for the directions of those that are wise and good. He is wise, it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so, whose ear is always open to good advice.

16. A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.

Note, 1. Passion is folly. A fool is known by his anger, so some read it; not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is lord of his anger, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He, that when he is provoked breaks out into indecent expressions in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and forget himself, Nabal certainly is his name, and folly is with him. A fool's indignation is known in the day, he proclaims it openly, whatever company he is in; or it is known in the day he is provoked, he cannot defer shewing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are presently put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have of their own spirits.

2. Meekness is wisdom, A prudent man covereth shame, i. e. 1. He covers the passion that is in his own breast; when his spirit is stirred, and his heart hot within him, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle, and suppresseth his resentments by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame, and though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak. 2. He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him, winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far. It is a kindness to ourselves, that contributes to the repose of our own minds to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we re-

ceive instead of aggravating them and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17. He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness, deceit.

Here is, 1. A faithful witness, commended for an honest man. He that makes conscience of speaking truth, and representing every thing fairly to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common converse, whether he be upon his oath or no, he sheweth forth righteousness, he makes it to appear that he is governed and acted by the principles and laws of righteousness; and he promotes justice by doing honour to it, and serving the administration of it. 2. A false witness condemned for a cheat, he sheweth forth deceit, not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving those he deals with; but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit, *Jer. ix. 3, 4, 5*. We are all concerned to possess ourselves with a dread and detestation of the sin of lying, *Psal. cxix. 163*. and a reigning principle of honesty.

18. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used.

1. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are like the piercings of a sword; opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken, and cut them to the heart: slanders, like a sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably; whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut asunder the bonds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other.

2. There are words that are curing and healing; the tongue of the wise is health, closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue had given, licking all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating matters in variance, and persuading to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by detraction and evil-speaking.

19. The lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Be it observed to the honour of truth, that sacred thing,

1. That if truth be spoken it will hold good, and whoever may be dis-obliged by it, and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground: great is the truth and will prevail: what is true will be always true, we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame.

2. That if truth be denied, yet in time it will out; a lying tongue that puts false colours upon things, is but for a moment, the lie will be disproved; the liar when he comes to be discovered will be found in several stories, and not consistent to himself as he is that speaks truth; and when he is found in a lie he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterwards be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light. Those therefore that make a lie their refuge, will find it a refuge of lies.

20. Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

Note 1. Those that devise mischief, for the accomplishing of it contrive how to impose upon others, but it will prove in the end that they deceive themselves. They that imagine evil under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of tins and the other advantage and satisfaction which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them imagine it never so artfully, deceivers will be deceived.

2. Those that consult the good of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace, and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts, and contrive healing methods, and, according as their sphere is, further the public welfare, will have not only the credit, but the comfort of it, to them there is joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. Blessed are the peacemakers.

21. There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them; he will by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation. And though they may come into trouble, into many troubles, yet to them those troubles shall have no evil in them whatever they have to others, *Psal. xci. 10*. for they shall be over-ruled to work for their good.

2. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. They that live in contempt of God and man, that are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled. They shall be more and more mischievous, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, *Rom. i. 29*. Or, they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. They that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus, *There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief* and spite against them. They shall be safe under the protection of heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them.

22. Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

We are here taught,

1. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable in his sight that allow themselves in it; not only because it is a breach of his law, but because it is destructive to human society.

2. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words but in all our actions; because those that deal truly and sincerely in all their dealings, are his delight, and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with and make use of those that are honest, and that we may put a confidence in; such therefore let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Note,

Note, 1. He that is wise doth not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he doth not; he communicates his knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it, when the showing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that favours of ostentation, and not take all occasions to shew their learning and reading, but only to use it for good purposes, and then let *their own works praise them.* *Ars est celare artem.*

2. He that is foolish cannot avoid proclaiming his folly, and it is his shame that he cannot. *The hearts of fools* by their foolish words and actions *proclaimeth foolishness*, either they do not desire to hide it, so little sense have they of good and evil, honour and dishonour, or they know not how to hide it, so little discretion have they in the management of themselves, *Ecccl. i. 3.*

24. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note, 1. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam, because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business. *1 Kings xi. 28.* Men that take pains in study and serviceableness, will thereby gain such an interest and reputation, as will give them a dominion over all about them, by which means many have risen strangely. He that has been *faithful in a few things* shall be made *ruler over many things.* The elders that *labour in the word and doctrine* are *worthy of double honour*; and those that are diligent when they are young, will get that which will enable them to rule, and so to rest when they are old.

2. Knavery is the way to slavery. *The slothful* and careless, or rather the deceitful, for so the word signifies, *shall be under tribute.* Those that because they will not take pains in an honest calling, live by their shifts and arts of dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly, and will be kept under. They that are diligent and honest when they are apprentices, will come to be masters; but those that are otherwise, are the fools, which all their days must be *servants to the wife in heart.*

25. Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, 1. The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is *heaviness in the heart*, it is a load of care and fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, depressing them, and disabling to exert themselves with any vigour in what is to be done, or courage in what is to be borne, it makes them stoop; prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed can neither do the duty, nor take the comfort of any relation, condition or conversation: It is that which those that are inclined to it should therefore watch and pray against.

2. The cure of it: *A good word* from God, applied by faith, *maketh it glad*: such a word as that (saith one of the rabbins) *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*; the good word of God, particularly the gospel is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy laden, *Matth. xi. 28.* Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

See here, 1. That good men do well for themselves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion, and in both they excel other people; *the righteous is more abundant than his neighbour*, so the margin; he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion, it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is in the sight of God of great price, who is the true judge of excellency. His neighbour may make a greater figure in the world, may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth.

2. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which seduceth them. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way, but the right way, it is so agreeable to flesh and blood, that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss, but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for. It is all a cheat; and therefore the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbours, that yet despise him, and trample upon him.

27. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Here is, 1. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit; (for the word here as before signifies both.) The slothful deceitful man has roast meat, but that which he roasts is not what he himself took in hunting, no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours; like the drones in the hive. Or, if the slothful deceitful man has taken any thing by hunting, (as sportsmen are seldom men of business) yet they do not roast it when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it, perhaps God in his providence cuts them short of it.

2. That which may make us in love with industry and honesty; that the *substance of a diligent man*, though it be not great, perhaps yet it is *precious.* It comes from the blessing of God; he hath comfort in it; it doth him good and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bread out of other people's mouth, and therefore he sees God gives it him in answer to his prayers.

28. In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us,

1. As a straight plain easy way; it is *the way of righteousness*, God's commands, the rules we are to walk by, are all holy, just, and good; religion has right reason and equity on its side; it is a *path-way*, a way which God cast up for us, *Isa. xxxv. 8.* it is a highway, the king's highway, the King of king's way. A way which is tracked before us by all the saints; the good old way, full of the footsteps of the flock.

2. As a safe pleasant comfortable way. (1.) There is not only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God which is better than life, the Spirit who is life. (2.) There is not only life in it, but so as that in it *there is no death.* None of that sorrow of the world which worketh death, and is an alloy to our present joy and life. No end of that life that is in the way of righteousness.

Here there is life, but there is death too: *In the way of righteousness there is life, and no death*; life and immortality.

C H A P. XIII.

1. A WISE son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents, it is no new thing for some to be hopeful, and others the contrary; now here we are taught to distinguish. 1. There are great hopes of those that have a reverence for their parents, and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is a *wise son*, and is in a fair way to be wiser, that *heareth his father's instruction*, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and doth not only give it the hearing.

2. There are little hopes of those that will not so much as *hear rebuke* with any patience, but scorn to submit to government, and scoff at those that deal friendly with them. How can those mend a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness?

2. A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of transgressors shall eat violence.

Note, 1. If that which comes from within out of the heart be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is *to the use of edifying.*

2. Violence done, will recoil in the face of him that doth it. *The soul of the transgressors*, that harbours and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, *shall eat violence*, they shall have their belly full of it. *Reward her as she has rewarded thee*, Rev. xviii. 6. Every man shall drink as he brews; eat as he speaks; for by our words we must be justified or condemned, *Matth. xii. 37.* as our fruit is, so will our food be, *Rom. vi. 21, 22.*

3. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note, 1. A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul; he that is cautious what he saith, that thinks twice before he speaks once; that, if he have *thought evil*, *layeth his hand upon his mouth* to suppress it; that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on that bridle, he *keeps his soul* from a great deal both of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections upon himself, and others upon him.

2. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue. *He that pens wide his lips*, to let out every thing that comes uppermost, *quicquid in buccum venerit*, that loves to bawl and bluster, and make a noise, and affects such a liberty of speech as bids defiance both to God and man, he *shall have destruction.* It will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, *Jam. iii. 6.*

4. The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, 1. The misery and shame of the slothful; see how foolish and absurd they are; they desire the gains which the diligent get, but they hate the pains which the diligent take; they covet every thing that is to be coveted, but will do nothing that is to be done; and therefore it follows, they have nothing; for he that will not labour, let him hunger, and let him not eat, *2 Thes. iii. 3.* *The desire of the slothful*, which should be his excitement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be.

2. The happiness and honour of the diligent: *Their soul shall be made fat*; they shall have abundance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it; and the more for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs: They that rest in idle wishes, know not what the advantages of religion are, whereas they that take pains in the service of God, find both the pleasure and profit of it.

5. A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Note, 1. Where grace reigns sin is loathsome: It is the undoubted character of every *righteous man*, that he *hates lying*, i. e. all sin, for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation: not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors it, from a rooted reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God.

2. Where sin reigns the *man is loathsome*: If his eyes were opened, and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself; he would *abhor himself* and *repent in dust and ashes*; however, he is so to God and all good men; particularly he makes himself so by lying, than which nothing is more detestable: and though he may think to face it out a while, yet he will *come to shame* and contempt at last, and will blush to shew his face, *Dan. xii. 2.*

6. Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, 1. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are *upright in their way*, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them from the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men which shall not fasten upon them, to do them any real mischief: *Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi*, Psalm xxv. 21.

2. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed? it is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them; they alone shall bear it.

7. There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

This observation is applicable,

1. To men's worldly estate. The world is a great cheat; not only the things of the world, but the men of the world; *all men are liars.* Here is an

an instance in two fore evils under the sun : (1.) Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich, and are thought to be so ; they trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle and a great shew, as if they had hid treasures, when perhaps, if all their debts were paid, they are not worth a groat. This is sin and will be shame, many a one hereby ruins his family, and brings reproach upon his profession of religion. They that thus live above what they have, choose to be subject to their own pride, rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly. (2.) Some that are really rich, would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so because they sordidly and sneakily live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than to use it, *Exod. vi. 1, 2.* In this there is ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

2. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul, it is true riches, but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly, or through mistake and ignorance of themselves. 1. There are many presuming hypocrites that are really poor and empty of grace; and yet either think themselves rich and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich and will not own their poverty. 2. There are many timorous, trembling Christians, that are spiritually rich and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or at least will not own it; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, *they make themselves poor.* The former mistake is destroying at last, this is disquieting in the mean time.

8. The ransom of a man's life are his riches : but the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of men's blessedness, at least in this world by their wealth, and that they are more or less happy according as they have more or less of this world's good ; but Solomon here shews what a gross mistake it is ; that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves, nor envy those that have abundance.

1. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet, to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches : *Stay us not, for we have treasures in the field,* Jer. xli. 8. Under some tyrants, it has been crime enough to be rich, and how little is a man beholden to his wealth, when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise had not been exposed ?

2. Those that are poor, if by some, that should be their friends, they are despised and overlooked, yet to balance that, they are also despised and overlooked by others that would be their enemies if they had any thing to lose : *The poor heareth not rebuke,* is not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble as the rich are ; for nobody thinks it worth while to take notice of them. When the rich Jews were carried captive to Babylon, *the poor of the land were left,* 2 Kings xxv. 12. Fair fall nothing once in seven years. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.*

9. The light of the righteous rejoiceth : but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, 1. The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting : *The light of the righteous rejoiceth,* i. e. it increaseth and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, graces, and comforts, with which their souls are illuminated ; these *shine more and more,* Prov. ix. 18. The Spirit is their light, and he gives them a fulness of joy, and *rejoiceth to do them good.*

2. The comfort of bad men withering and dying : *The lamp of the wicked burns dim and faint,* it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it will shortly be put out in utter darkness, *Isa. l. 11.* The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue ; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which will presently go out, and is easily put out.

10. Only by pride cometh contention ; but with it he well advised is wisdom.

Note, 1. Foolish pride is the great make-bait. Would you know whence comes wars and fightings ? they come from this root of bitterness : Whatever band other lusts may have in contention, passion, envy, covetousness, pride has the great hand, it is its pride that it will itself sow discord, and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction, either in their opinions or desires, impatient of competition and rivalry, impatient of contempt, or any thing that looks like a slight, and impatient of concession, and receding from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side ; and hence arises quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels in states and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud.

2. Those that are humble and peaceable, are wise and well advised : Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their Bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, they are wise, as in other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness and prevent quarrels.

11. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished ; but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

This shews that riches wear as they are won and wared.

1. That which is won ill will never wear well. for there is a curse attends it which will waste it ; and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting, will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending. *Wealth gotten by vanity,* will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished. That which is got by such employments as are not lawful, or not becoming Christians, which only serve to feed pride and luxury ; that which is got by gaming, or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity, as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. *De male quaestis vix gaudet tertius haeres.*

2. That which is got by industry and honesty, will grow more instead of growing less ; it will be a maintenance, it will be an inheritance, it will be an abundance : *He that laboureth, working with his hands, shall so increase,* as that he shall have to give to him that needeth, Eph. iv. 28. and when it comes to that, it will increase yet more and more.

12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick : but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

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Note, 1. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation, though not in the thing itself by a denial, yet in the time of it by a delay. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick* and languishing, fretful and peevish ; but hope quite dashed kills the heart dead, and the higher the expectation was raised, the more cutting is the frustration of it. It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, not to feed ourselves with any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation : and what we do hope for let us prepare to be disappointed, that if it should prove so, it may prove the easier ; and be not hasty.

2. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that at least which we have long wished for and waited for. *When the desire doth come,* it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for it is a tree of life. It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked, that their hopes will be frustrated, and will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints, that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13. Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed : but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, 1. The character of one that is marked for ruin : He that *despiseth the word of God,* and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly he *shall be destroyed,* for he slights that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease, and makes himself obnoxious to that divine wrath which will certainly be his destruction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it ; and it is to their own just destruction, they would not take warning.

2. The character of one that is sure to be happy : He that *feareth the commandment,* that stands in awe of God, pays a deference to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God, and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, he shall not only escape destruction, but *shall be rewarded* for his Godly fear. *In keeping his commandment there is great reward.*

14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

By the law of the wise and righteous, here we may understand, either the principles and rules by which they governed themselves, or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which ought to be a law to all about them ; and if they be so,

1. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction ; as a fountain of life, sending forth streams of living water ; the closer we keep to those rules, the more effectually we secure our own peace.

2. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan : They that follow the dictates of this law, will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape the snares of death, which they run themselves into, that forsake the law of the wise.

15. Good understanding giveth favour : but the way of transgressors is hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion has the advantage ; for,

1. The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable : *Good understanding gains favour with God and man ;* our Saviour grew in that favour, when he *increased in wisdom.* Those that carry themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that *serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,* are accepted of God, and approved of men, Rom. xiv. 17, 18. And how comfortably will that man pass through the world, who is well understood, and is therefore well accepted ?

2. The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and for that reason unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others : it is hard, hard upon others who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself, while he is doing that which is dis-obliging to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16. Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge : but a fool layeth open his folly.

Note, 1. It is wisdom to be cautious. *Every prudent discreet man doth all with knowledge,* i. e. considering with himself, and consulting with others, acts with deliberation, and is upon the reserve ; is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, not to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with ; will not deal with those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be deceived in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he hath.

2. It is folly to be rash as the fool is, who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of, and undertake that which he is no way fit for, and so *lays open his folly,* and makes himself ridiculous : he *began to build, and was not able to finish.*

17. A wicked messenger falleth into mischief : but a faithful ambassador is health.

Here is, 1. The ill consequences of betraying a trust. *A wicked messenger,* that being sent to negotiate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulgeth his counsels, and so defeats his designs : he cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly *fall into some mischief* or other, will be discovered and punished ; since nothing is more hateful to God and man, than the treachery of those that have a confidence reposed in them.

2. The happy effects of fidelity. An *ambassador that faithfully discharge his trust,* and serves the interest of those that employed him, he is health, he is health to those by whom, and for whom, he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding : he is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors ; those that are wicked and false to Christ, and the souls of men, they do mischief, and *fall into mischief* ; but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words, to others and themselves.

18. Poverty and shame *shall be to him that refuseth instruction*: but he that regardeth reproof, shall be honoured.

Note, 1. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught, will certainly be abased. He that *refuseth* the good *instruction* offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour, and an abridgment of his liberty, *poverty and shame shall be to him*; he will become a beggar, and live and die in disgrace, every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungovernable.

2. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults, shall certainly be exalted. *He that regardeth reproof*, whoever gives it him, and will mend what is amiss when it is shewed him, he gains respect as wise and candid; he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him, and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19. The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shews the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy, and will not.

1. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness: God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be *sweet to the soul*, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. *The desire* of good men towards the favour of God and spiritual blessings, brings that which is *sweet to their souls*; we know those that can say so by experience, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.*

2. Yet they will not be happy; for it is an *abomination to them to depart from evil*, which is necessary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, 1. Those that would be good must keep good company, which is an evidence for them that they would be good; men's characters is known by the company they choose; and will be a means of making them good, of shewing them the way, and of quickening and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaintance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and keep up pious and profitable talk with them, *Eccles. viii. 9. Mistrust not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers.* And chap. vi. 35. *Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee.*

2. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company: *A companion of fools shall be broken*, so some; *shall be known*, so the Seventy; known to be a fool; *nescitur ex socio.* He *will be like them*, so some; *will be made wicked*, so others; it comes all to one; for all those, and those only, that make themselves wicked, will be *destroyed*; and those who associate with evil doers, are debauched, and so undone, and at last have laid their deaths upon it.

21. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous, good shall be repaid.

Here see, 1. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath; *Evil pursues* them close wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the man-slayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain: whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for a while and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do.

2. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is; the God that cannot lie, hath engaged that *to the righteous good shall be repaid*; they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered in this world; so that though many have been losers for their righteousness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompence do not come quickly, it will come in the day of payment, in the world of retribution; and it will be an abundant recompence.

22. A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

See here, 1. How a good man's estate lasts; he *leaves an inheritance to his children's children*: It is part of his praise, that he is thoughtful for posterity; that he doth not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him; not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality: he trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful both by justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he hath, and to entail that upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain. *A good man*, by being good, and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his substance, and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail; and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, *Psal. ciii. 17.*

2. How it increases by the accession of *the wealth of the sinner* to it, for that is *laid up for the just*. If it be asked, How should good men grow so rich, who are not so eager upon the world as others are, and who commonly suffer for their well-doing? it is here answered, That God, in his providence, often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. *The innocent shall divide the silver*, *Job xxvii. 16, 17.* The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians, *Exod. xii. 36.* and *eat the riches of the Gentiles*, *Isa. lxi. 6.*

23. Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

See here, 1. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man, by making the best of every thing, may live comfortably upon it. *Much food is in the tillage of the poor*, the poor farmers, that have but a little, but take pains with that little, and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness, that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of, the more let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg.

2. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscretion: *There is that hath a great deal*, but it is *destroyed* and brought to nothing, *for want of judgment*, i. e. prudence in the management of it: men over-build themselves, or over-buy themselves; keep greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford; suffer what they have to go to decay, and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and all *for want of judgment*.

24. He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, 1. To the education of children in that which is good, there is necessarily due correction of them for what is amiss; every child of ours is a child of Adam, and therefore has that foolishness bound up in his heart, which calls for rebuke more or less; that rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, It is *his rod* that must be used, the rod of a parent, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good; not the rod of a servant.

2. It is good to begin *betimes* with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed: The branch is easily bended when it is tender.

3. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to be fond of them, that do not keep them under a strict discipline, and by all proper methods; severe ones, when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults, and afraid of offending. They abandon them to the worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, *Heb. xii. 7, 8, 9.*

25. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Note, 1. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough, and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less; enough is as good as a feast. They that are fed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there: they eat and are filled.

2. It is the misery of the wicked that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their *belly shall want*; their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

C H A P. XIV.

1. EVERY wife woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a family; by a fruitful wife a family is multiplied and replenished with children, and so built up; but by a prudent wife, one that is pious, and industrious, and considerate, the affairs of a family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, *Ester i. 22.*

2. There is many a family brought to ruin by ill housewifery as well as by ill husbandry. A *foolish* woman, that has no fear of God, nor regard to her business; that is wilful, and wasteful, and humourous; that indulgeth her ease and appetite, and is all for jaunting and junketing, cards and the play-house; though she come to a plentiful estate, and to a family before-hand, she will impoverish and waste it, and will as certainly be the ruin of her house, as if she *plucked it down with her hands*; and the husband himself with all his care can scarce prevent it.

2. He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Here is, 1. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which, what is more becoming, or should be more pleasing to the rational creature? sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God; in this more than in any thing sin appears exceeding sinful, that it despiseth God, whom angels adore. They that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them; his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself, and all his attributes.

2. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace, and the fear of God reigning in him, *he walks in his uprightness*, he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every step he makes, as well as the step he takes, is by rule: Here is one that honours God. But on the contrary, *he that is perverse in his ways*, that wilfully follows his own appetites and passions; that is unjust and dishonest, and contradicts his profession in his conversation; however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a despiser of God himself.

3. In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

See here, 1. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shews itself in the words: *In the mouth there is pride*, proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding and giving law; this is the rod, or branch of pride (the word is used only here, and *Isa. xi. 1.*) it grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem: the root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch; or it is meant of a smiting, beating rod; *a rod of pride* which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him, and deals blows at pleasure, but it will in the end be a rod to himself; the proud man shall come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth; not cut as a soldier, but caned as a servant; and herein he will be beaten with his own rod. *Psal. lxxiv. 8.*

2. A humble wife man saving himself, and consulting his own good: *The lips of the wise shall preserve them*, from doing that mischief to others, which

which proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves, which haughty scorers are often involved in.

4. Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

Note, 1. The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty: *Where no oxen are*, to till the ground, and tread out the corn, *the crib is empty, is clean*, there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by *cleanness of teeth*, Amos iv. 6. *Where no oxen are*, there is nothing to be done at the ground, and then nothing to be had out of it; *the crib indeed is clean* from dung, which pleaseth the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry, because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung of the ox is wanted. This shews the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it; that (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.

2. Those that take pains about their ground, are likely to reap the profit of it; who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and show, more husbandmen than footmen, they are likely to thrive: *Much increase is by the strength of the ox*, that is made for our service and is profitable alive and dead.

5. A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for,

1. A witness that is conscientious will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue; not for good-will or ill-will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge; whoever is pleased or displeased; and then judgment runs down like a river.

2. But a witness that will be bribed and biased, and browbeaten, will utter lies, and not stick at it, nor startle at it, with as much readiness and assurance, as if it were all true.

6. A scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Note, 1. The reason why some people seek wisdom, and do not find it, is because they do not seek it from a right principle, and in a right manner. They are scorers, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them, and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have whereof to accuse him, and they were never the wiser. They that seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to serve their pride and covetousness, no marvel they do not find it, for they seek amiss. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a scorner, and therefore it was denied him, Luke xvi. 8. Scorers speed not in prayer.

2. To those that understand themselves aright, who depart from evil, for that is understanding, the knowledge of God and of his will is easy. The parables which harden scorers in their scorning, and make divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those that are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain, and intelligible, and familiar to them, Matt. xiii. 11—15, 16. The same word which to the scornful is a favour of death unto death, to the humble and serious is a favour of life unto life. He that understandeth so as to depart from evil, for that is understanding, to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dispositions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction, and receive the impressions of it.

7. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

See here, 1. How we may discern a fool, and discover him; a wicked man, for he is a foolish man; if we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge; if we find there is no relish or favour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is all corrupt and corrupting, and nothing in it good and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad.

2. How we must decline such a one, and depart from him; Go from his presence, for thou perceivest there is no good to be got by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it. Sometimes the only way we have of reproofing wicked discourse and witnessing against it, is by leaving the company and going out of the hearing of it.

8. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

See here, 1. The good conduct of a wise and good man, he manageth himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here commended, but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions. Christian prudence consists in a right understanding of our way; for we are travellers, whose concern it is, not to spy wonders, but to get forward towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be critics and busybodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves, and ponder the path of our feet: to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them; the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them; the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them; and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them: to understand the rules we are to walk by, and the ends we are to walk towards, and walk accordingly.

2. The ill conduct of a bad man; he puts a cheat upon himself, he doth not rightly understand his way, he thinks he doth, and so misseth his way, and goes on in his mistake: *The folly of fools is deceit*, it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9. Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

See here, 1. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness; they make a mock at sin: they make a laughing matter of the sins of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn; and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin, and when they have committed it; they call evil good, and good evil, Isa. v. 20. turn it off with a jest, rush into sin, Jer. viii. 6.

and say, they shall have peace though they go on: They care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that they tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it. Fools make a mock at the sin-offering; so some; they that make light of sin, make light of Christ. They are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of, Amos ii. 13. which lay heavy upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly.

2. How good people are engaged in their goodness: Among the righteous there is favour; if they in any thing offend, they presently repent, and obtain the favour of God. They have a good will one to another; and among them in their societies there is mutual charity and compassion in cases of offences, and no mocking.

10. The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, and the changes of his temper, save the spirit of a man?*

1. Every man feels most from his own burden, especially that which is a burden upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed, and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure other's griefs, for we know not what they feel, their stroke perhaps is heavier than their groaning.

2. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in divine consolations, which others are not aware of, much less sharers in. As the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer, are such as a stranger doth not intermeddle with, and therefore is no competent judge of.

11. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, 1. Sin is the ruin of great families: *The house of the wicked*, though built never so strong and high, shall be overthrown, shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fall in the storm: the deluge that comes will sweep it away.

2. Righteousness is the life and stability, even of mean families. Even the tabernacle of the upright, though movable and despicable as a tent, yet shall flourish in outward prosperity, if infinite wisdom see good; however, in graces and comfort, which are true riches and honours.

12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.

1. Their way is seemingly fair, it seemeth right to themselves, they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them; much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal, these they imagine will bring them to heaven: they flatter themselves in their own eyes, that all will be well at last.

2. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake; it is the ways of death, eternal death; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

13. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

This shews the vanity of carnal mirth, and proves what Solomon said of laughter, that it is mad; for,

1. There is sadness under it. Sometimes when sinners are under convictions, or some great trouble, they dissemble their grief by a forced mirth, and put a good face on it because they will not seem to yield; they cry not when he binds them: Nay, when men really are merry, yet at the same time there is some alloy or other to it; something that casts a damp upon their mirth, which all their gaiety cannot keep from their heart: Their consciences tell them they have no reason to be merry, Hos. ix. 1. They cannot but see the vanity of it. Spiritual joy is seated in the soul; the joy of the hypocrite is but from the teeth outward. See John xvi. 22. 2 Cor. vi. 10.

2. There is worse after this. *The end of that mirth is heaviness*. It is soon over, like the crackling of thorns under a pot; and if the conscience be awake, all sinful and profane mirth will be reflected upon with bitterness; if not, the heaviness will be so much the greater, when for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment. The sorrows of the saints will end in everlasting joys, Psal. cxxxiv. 5. But the laughter of fools will end in endless weeping and wailing.

14. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

Note, 1. The misery of sinners will be an eternal forfeit upon their sins. The backslider in heart, that for fear of suffering, or in hope of profit or pleasure forsakes God and his duty, he shall be filled with his own ways, God will give him enough of them; they will not leave their brutish lusts and passions, and therefore they shall stick by them to their everlasting terror and torment; he that is filthy shall be filthy still. Son, remember, shall fill them with their own ways, and let their sins in order before them. Backsliding begins in the heart, it is the heart of unbelief that departs from God; and of all backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on their own ways, Luke xi. 26.

The happiness of the saints will be an eternal satisfaction in their graces, as tokens of, and qualifications for God's peculiar favour. A good man shall be abundantly satisfied from himself, i. e. from what God has wrought in him. He has rejoicing in himself alone, Gal. vi. 4. As sinners never think they have sin enough till it brings them to hell, so saints never think they have grace enough till it brings them to heaven.

15. The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

Note, 1. It is folly to be credulous, to heed every flying report, to give ear to every man's story, though never so improbable, to take things upon trust

trust from common fame; to depend upon every man's profession of friendship, and give credit to every one that will promise payment; those are *simple*, who thus believe every word, forgetting that all men in some sense are liars in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie.

2. It is wisdom to be cautious; the prudent man will try before he trusts; will weigh both the credibility of the witness, and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment as the thing appears, or suspend his judgment till it appears. *Prove all things, and believe not every spirit.*

16. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth and is confident.

Note, 1. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against every thing that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from evil, from the evil of sin, and thereby from all other evil, and therefore it is wisdom to fear, i. e. to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin, or dallying with the beginnings of it. A wise man for fear of harm keeps out of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation.

2. Presumption is folly. He that when he is warned of his danger rageth and is confident, furiously pusheth on, cannot bear to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and fearless of danger persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin, and plays upon the precipice, he is a fool, for he acts against his reason and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Note, 1. Passionate men are justly laughed at, men that are peevish and touchy, and are soon angry upon every the least provocation, they deal foolishly, they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt, they themselves cannot but be ashamed of when the heat is over. The consideration of which should engage those especially that are in reputation for wisdom and honour, with the utmost care to bridle their passion.

2. Malicious men are justly dreaded and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischievous to all societies. A man of wicked devices, that stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being revenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour, and do him an ill turn, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this is hated by all mankind. The character of an angry man is piteous, through the surprise of a temptation he disturbs and disgraceth himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it; but that of a spiteful, revengeful man is odious, there is no fence against him, nor cure for him.

18. The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Note, 1. Sin is the shame of sinners; the simple that love simplicity get nothing by it, they inherit folly, i. e. they have it by inheritance, so some: This corruption of nature is derived from our first parents, and all the calamities that attend it, we have it by kind, it was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, hold it as fast, and are as loath to part with it. What they value themselves by is really foolish, and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly? They will for ever rue their own foolish choices.

2. Wisdom is the honour of the wise. The prudent crown themselves with knowledge, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and there is nothing they are so ambitious of; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will by no means part with; they press towards the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and progress. They shall have the praise of it; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. They crown knowledge, so some read it, they are a credit to their profession; wisdom is not only justified, but glorified of all her children.

19. The evil bow before the good: and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is, 1. The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits, while good men by the blessing of God are enriched, and enabled to give, and do good even to the evil, for where God grants life, we must not deny a livelihood.

2. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God's people. The evil ought always to bow before the good, and sometimes they are made to do it, and to know that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. They desire their favour Eph. vii. 7. their prayers, 2 Kings iii. 12.

3. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion, Psal. xlix. 14. When the foolish virgins shall come a-begging to the wife for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

This shews not what should be, but what is the common way of the world; to be shy of the poor, and fond of the rich.

1. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect. The poor that should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, is hated, looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, even by his own neighbour, that before he fell into disgrace was intimate with him, and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends, that are gone in winter. It is good having God our friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor.

2. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy. The rich have many friends, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself by or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their God, idolize them that have most of its good things, and seek their favour as if indeed they were heaven's favourites.

21. He that despised his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

See here how men's character and condition are measured, and judged of by their carriage towards their poor neighbours.

1. Those that look upon them with contempt, are here under a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly. He that despiseth his neighbour because he is low in the world, because he is of mean extraction, rustic education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, he is a sinner, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, shall be dealt with as a sinner, unhappy is he.

2. Those that look upon them with compassion, are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character. He that has mercy on the poor, is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, happy is he; he doth that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterwards reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the souls of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22. Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

See here, 1. How miserably mistaken they are, that not only do evil but devise it. Do they not err? Yes, certainly they do; every one knows it. They think, by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better, but they are mistaken. God's justice cannot be outwitted. They that devise evil against their neighbours greatly err; for it will certainly turn upon themselves, and end in their own ruin: a fatal error.

2. How wisely they consult their own interest, that not only do good, but devise it. Mercy and truth shall be to them, not a reward of debt, they will own that they merit nothing, but a reward of mercy, mere mercy, mercy according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a debtor. Those that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of doing good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive, and most acceptable to those that need it, by liberal things they shall stand, Isa. xxxii. 8.

23. In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

Note, 1. Working without talking, will make men rich. In all labour of the head, or of the hand, there is profit; it will turn to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done, there is something to be had. The stirring hand gets a penny. It is good therefore to keep in business, and keep in action, and what our hand finds to do, do it with all our might.

2. Talking without working, will make men poor. Those that love to brag of their business, and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and under pretence of improving themselves by conversation, neglect the work of their place and day, they waste what they have, and the course they take tends to penury, and will end in it. It is true in the affairs of our souls; those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer, will find profit in it. But if men's religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24. The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

Observe, 1. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful. The crown of the wise is their riches, i. e. their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority and influence upon others. They that have wealth, and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God, and doing good in the world. Wisdom is good without an inheritance, but better with it.

2. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them. The foolishness of fools, put them in what condition you will, is folly, and will shew itself, and shame them; if they have riches, they do mischief with them, and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25. A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

See here, 1. How much praise is due to a faithful witness: he delivereth the souls of the innocent that are falsely accused, and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest to bring truth to light, and rescue those that are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister, that truly witnesseth for God against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death.

2. How little regard is to be had to a false witness; he forges lies and, yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable, for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation, by all means possible, to detect and punish false witness-bearing, yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26. In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. 27. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

In these two verses, we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God by the advantages which attend a religious life; the fear of the Lord is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.

1. Where this reigns, it produceth a holy security and serenity of mind; there is in it a strong confidence, it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace, whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. I know that I shall be justified: None of these things move me: such is the language of this confidence.

2. It entails a blessing upon posterity. They that by faith make God their confidence, their children after them shall be encouraged by the promise that God will be a God to believers, and to their seed, to fly to him

him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents, often do the better for their parents' instructions and example, and fare the better for their faith and prayers. *Our fathers trusted in thee, therefore we will.*

3. It is an over-flowing, ever-flowing spring of comfort and joy; it is a fountain of life, yielding constant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul: joys that are pure and fresh, are life to the soul, and quench its thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water, that is springing up to, and is the earnest of, eternal life.

4. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have a true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness, will not be allured by the baits of sin to swallow its hook; they know better things than any it can pretend to offer, and therefore it is easy to them to depart from the snares of death, and to keep their foot from being taken in them.

28. In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

Here is a maxim in politics, which carries its own evidence with it.

1. That it is much for the honour of a king, to have a populous kingdom: it is a sign he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection, and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable, and formidable; happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his quiver full of arrows, he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Psal. cxxvii. 4, 5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places, that many may be added to his church.

2. That when the people are lessened, the prince is weakened; in the want of people is the weakness of the prince, so some read it; trade lies dead, the ground lies unutilled, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

29. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Note, 1. Meekness is wisdom. He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infirmities of human nature, and the constitution and human society, that is slow to anger, and knows how to excuse others' faults, as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them, so as by no provocation to be out of the possession of his own soul. A mild, patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is wisdom itself.

2. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed. He that is hasty of spirit: whose heart is as tinder to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself, and make those about him stand in awe of him; whereas, really, he exalts his own folly, makes it known, as that which is lifted up, is visible to all, and he submits himself to it, as to the government of one that is exalted.

30. A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

The foregoing verse shewed how much our reputation, this how much our health, depends on the good government of our passions, and the preserving of the temper of the mind.

1. A healing spirit, that is made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition, is the life of the flesh; it contributes to a good constitution of body, people grow fat with good humour.

2. A fretful, envious, discontented spirit, is its own punishment, it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirit, makes the countenance pale, and is the rottenness of the bones; they that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them gnash with their teeth and melt away, Psalm cxii. 10.

Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia.

31. He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

God is here pleased to interest himself, more than one would imagine, in the usage given to the poor.

1. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them.—Whoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him, because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him and gave him his being, the same that is the Author of our being, we have all one Father, one Maker; see how Job considered this, Job xxxi. 15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot; so that if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them, in laying them low, that they might be trampled upon.

He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them; he takes them as done to himself, and will shew himself accordingly pleased with them: *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat.* Those therefore that have any true honour for God, will shew it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and patronize.

32. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Here is, 1. The desperate condition of a wicked man, when he goes out of the world. He is driven away in his wickedness, he cleaves so close to the world, that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is driven away out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him, and sin cleaves so close to him, that it is inseparable, it goes with him into another world; he is driven away in his wickedness, dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified; his wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, chafed out of the world.

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2. The comfortable condition of a godly man, when he finisheth his course; he hath hope in his death, of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. They then have the grace of hope in them; though they have pain, and some dread of death, yet they have hope; they have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope, which God, that cannot lie, has promised.

33. Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure so as not to boast of it, Matt. xiii. 43. though he doth not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His wisdom rests in his heart, he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but he doth not unseasonably talk of it, and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim to the head.

2. Openness and ostentation is a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasion, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or, the folly that is in the midst of fools is made known by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to shew his folly, than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to shew his wisdom.

34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.

Note, 1. Justice reigning in a nation puts an honour upon it. A righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers; (alms are sometimes called righteousness) these exalt a nation, they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high, as a holy nation, Deut. xvi. 19.

2. Vice reigning in a nation puts disgrace upon it. Sin is a reproach to any city or kingdom, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances of both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God all about them insulted them, and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use their power for the suppression of vice, and support of virtue.

35. The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

This shews that in a well ordered court and government, smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in public trusts, according to their merits; Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule.

1. That those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have to seek or undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected, to please a party or a favourite.

2. That those who are selfish and false, that betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus cause shame, they shall be displaced, and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

C H A P. XV.

1. A SOFT answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words: If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, a soft answer will disperse it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak them fair, and give them good words, and they will be pacified; as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness, Judg. viii. 1, 2, 3. whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephtha's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were ill, Judg. xii. 1, 2, 3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

2. How the peace will be broken, that we for our parts may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord like grievous words, calling foul names, as *Raca*, and *thou fool*, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction and education, or any thing that lessens them, and makes them mean: scornful, spiteful reflections, by which men affect to shew their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which doth but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest, some will lose a friend, and make an enemy.

2. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Note, 1. A good heart, by the tongue, becomes very useful. He that has knowledge, is not only to enjoy it for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is the tongue that must make use of it in pious, profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instruction, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then knowledge is used aright; and to him that hath, and thus useth what he hath, more shall be given.

2. A wicked heart, by the tongue, becomes very hurtful; for the mouth of fools belcheth out foolishness; which is very unfavoury and offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceedeth from an evil treasure within, the filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting, corrupts the good manners of some, and debaucheth them; and grieves the good hearts of others, and disturbs them.

3. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of mighty use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this: That the eye of God is always upon the children of men.

1. An eye to discern all; not only from which nothing can be concealed: but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked,

or looked slightly upon. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place*: for he not only sees all from on high, *Psal. xxxiii. 13.* but he is every where present, Angels are *full of eyes*, *Rev. iv. 8.* but God is all eye. It notes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows are under his eye.

2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions; he beholds *the evil and the good*; is displeased with the evil, and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, *Psal. i. 6.—xi. 4.* The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both; and knows their true character; which speaks as much comfort to saints, as terror to sinners.

4. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Note, 1. A good tongue is healing; healing to wounded consciences, by comforting them; to sin-sick souls, by convincing them; to peace and love when it is broken, by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, *which is a tree of life*, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, *Rev. xxii. 2.* He that knows how to discourse, will make the place he lives in a paradise.

2. An ill tongue is wounding; *perverseness*, passion, falsehood, and filthiness *there is a breach in the spirit*; it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned *breaches in the spirit*. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broke by them.

5. A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, 1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the desired effect be not presently perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so, than to suffer them to go undisturbed in the way to ruin.

2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof, even hardships must be submitted to, but to value them as favours, and not despise them; to make use of them for their conduct, and always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise, and a means of making them so; whereas he that flights his good education is a fool, and is like to live and die one.

6. In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, 1. Where righteousness is, riches are, and the comforts of them: *In the house of the righteous is much treasure.* Religion teacheth men to be diligent, and temperate, and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased; but that is not all, God *blesteth the habitation of the just*, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this, world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified, *Psal. xvii. 14.* but a righteous man's first care is for his soul, and then for his seed; to have treasure in his heart, and then in his house; which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: *In the revenues of the wicked*, the great incomes they have, *there is trouble*; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy, and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joys of their revenues, and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7. The lips of the wife disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doth not so.

This is to the same purpose with, *ver. 2.* and shews what a blessing a wife man is, and what a burden a fool is to those about him: Only here observe farther,

1. That we then *use knowledge aright*, when we disperse it; not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make good use of it; but *give a portion* of this spiritual alms to seven, and also to eight; not only be communicative, but diffusive of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge; must teach some, that they may teach others; and so it is dispersed.

2. That it is not only a fault to *pour out foolishness* but it is a shame not to *disperse knowledge*; at least, to drop some wise word or other; *The heart of the foolish doth not so*; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or if it had has neither skill or will to do good with it, and therefore is little worth.

8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Note, 1. God doth so hate wicked people, whose hearts are malicious, and their lives mischievous, that even their *sacrifices are an abomination* to him. God hath sacrifices brought him, even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience, and to keep up their reputation in the world; as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice: but their sacrifices though never so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity, nor from a good principle: they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are *an abomination* to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, *Prov. vii. 13.* See *Isa. i. 11.*

2. God has such a love for upright, good people, that, though they are not at the expence of a sacrifice, (he himself hath provided that) their *prayer is a delight* to him: Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased: He not only an-

swers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse. 1. *The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God*: not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because *their way*, the whole course and tenor of their conversation is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him; And sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable, if intended to obtain a continuance at sin, and a permission to go on in it.

2. Therefore *the prayer of the upright is his delight*, because he is a friend of God, and *he loves him that*, though he have not yet attained, is *following after righteousness*, aiming at it, and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, *Phil. iii. 13.*

10. Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

This shews that those who cannot bear to be corrected, must expect to be destroyed.

1. It is common for those that have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon it a great affront to be reprov'd and admonish'd; they are very uneasy at it, they cannot, they will not bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reprov'd, and hate those that deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners reproofs are worst refented by apostates.

2. It is certain that those who will not be reprov'd will be ruined: *He that hateth reproof*, and hardens his heart against it, he is joined to his idols, let him alone, *he shall die*, and persist for ever in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sin, *2 Chron. xxv. 16.* *I know that God has determined to destroy thee*, because thou couldst not bear to be reprov'd, *Prov. xxix. 1.*

11. Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said, *ver. 3.* concerning God's omniscience, in order to his judging of evil and good.

1. God knows all things, even those things that are hid from the eyes of all living, *Hell and destruction are before the Lord*; not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns; but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all *before the Lord*, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost, or be to seek when they are to be raised again: He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor needs he any monument with a *Uic jacet* to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible; the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances are under God's eye. The word here used for *destruction* is *Abaddon*, which is one of the devil's names, *Rev. ix. 11.* That destroyer, though he deceives us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognisance. God examines him whence he comes, *Job i. 7.* and sees through all his disguises, though he is fly and subtil, and swift, *Job xxvi. 6.*

2. He knows particularly *the hearts of the children of men*. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, *much more* can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since all their cheats they learned of him. *God is greater than our hearts*, and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible judge of every man's character, *Heb. iv. 13.*

12. A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

A scorner is one that only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods of his conviction and reformation; and as an evidence of that,

1. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him. *He loveth not to reprove him*; so some read it. He cannot endure to retire into his own heart, and commune seriously with that; will not admit of any free thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite, if he can help it. That man's case is sad, who is afraid of being acquainted and arguing with himself.

2. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends. *He will not go unto the wise*, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms: but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults and prevailed with to reform.

13. A merry heart maketh a chearful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Here, 1. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, makes men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the converse, making the face to shine, and rendering us pleasant one to another. A chearful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a farther lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation: *By sorrow of the heart*, when it has got dominion, and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do if it be indulged a while, *the spirit is broken*, and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. *The sorrow of the world worketh death.* Let us therefore *weep as though we wept not*, in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondered at,

1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom but still seeking the increase of

of it; the more he has the more he would have: *The heart of him that has understanding, rejoiceth so in the knowledge it has attained to, that it is still coveting more; and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more; growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Si dixisti sufficit, peristi.*

2. A fool well satisfied with his folly, and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15. All the days of the afflicted are evil; but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men.

1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they have no pleasure in them. They eat in darkness, Eccles. v. 17. and never eat with pleasure, Job xxi. 25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world? Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, as merry as we are.

2. Others enjoy great prosperity, and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have a continual feast, and in the abundance of all things they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is oil to the wheels of their obedience; all this, and heaven too; then we serve a good master. But let not such feast without fear, a sudden change may come; therefore rejoice with trembling.

16. Better is little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. 17. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse, that he who hath not a large estate, or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has a continual feast; christian contentment and joy in God make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us, what that is which is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit, which will furnish a man with a continual feast, though he has but little in the world; holiness and love.

1. Holiness. A little if we manage it and enjoy it in the fear of the Lord, if we keep a good conscience, and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, it will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, than great treasure and trouble therewith. Observe here, 1. It is often the lot of those that fear God, to have but a little of this world; the poor receive the gospel, and poor they still are, Jam. ii. 5. 2. Those that have great treasure, have many times great trouble therewith: It is so far from making them easy, that it increases their care and hurry: The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep. 3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God: if those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. 4. It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but a little of the world, and to have it with a good conscience: to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty, and live without God in the world.

2. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life. 1. If brethren dwell together in unity, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals, and in more solemn entertainments, that will make a dinner of herbs a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it, and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dainties. 2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the heaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome, than a table richly spread with a grudging, evil eye.

*Cum torvo vultu mihi canula nulla placebit,
Cum placido vultu canula ulla placet.*

18. A wrathful man stirreth up strife; but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Here is, 1. Passion the great make-bate; thence come wars and fightings; anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: A wrathful man, with his peevish, passionate reflections, stirs up strife, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though never so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produceth another.

2. Meekness the great peace maker. He that is slow to anger, not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeaseth it, if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, pieceth those again that were fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

19. The way of the slothful man is a hedge of thorns; but the way of the righteous is made plain.

See here, 1. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work, pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all; as if God were a hard master, reaping where he had not sown; at least, that it is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance, as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered; an honest desire and endeavour to do our duty, will by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewed with roses: The way of the righteous is made plain; it is easy to be gone, and not rough; easy to be hit and not intricate.

20. A wife son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, 1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good, if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

2. To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness. A foolish son despiseth his mother, that had much sorrow with him, and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful, and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wicked man, that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he hath swallowed it. Folly is joy to him, other's folly is so, and his own much more; he sins, not only without regret, but with delight; not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it: this is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

2. It is the character of a wise and good man, that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; but a man of understanding, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding) he walks uprightly, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God: and this is a constant pleasure and joy to him. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

22. Without counsel, purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broke, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass: things happen which defeat them, that with a little consultation might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. Plus vident oculi quam oculus. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: In the multitude of counsellors (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction) purposes are established. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, he advised with the young men.

23. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it?

Note, 1. Then we speak wisely when we speak seasonably. The answer of the mouth will then be our credit and joy, when it is pertinent to the purpose, and is spoken in due season, when it was needed and would be regarded, and, as we say, hit the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off hand, just when there is occasion for it and it comes in well.

2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort, and to the advantage of others. A man has joy by the answer of his mouth; he may take a pleasure, he may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well, that the hearers admire him, and say, How good is it! and how much good doth it do!

24. The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us.

1. As very safe and comfortable. It is the way of life, the way that leads to eternal life, in which we shall find that joy and satisfaction, which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness; be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to and in danger of: It is to depart from hell beneath, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles; from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

As very sublime and honourable; it is above. A good man sets his affections on things above, and deals in those things; his conversation is in heaven, his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, above, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great, his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity, and out of the sight of foolish men.

25. The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

Note 1. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly doth it in the course of his providence. The proud, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them, and trample on all about them, are such as God doth resist and will destroy; not them only, but their houses, which they are proud of, and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

2. Those that are dejected God delights to support, and many times doth it remarkably. He will establish the border of the poor widow, which proud, injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak, and appear for those that are run down.

26. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination.

to the LORD: but *the words of the pure are pleasant words.*

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed; so that,

1. *The thoughts and words of the wicked*, that are like themselves wicked, that aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, they are an *abomination to the Lord*, he is displeased at them, and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart, and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2. *The thoughts and words of the pure*, being pure like themselves, clean and honest and sincere, they are *pleasant words*, and pleasant thoughts, well pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God, *the words of their mouth and the meditation of their heart*, in prayer and praise, are *acceptable to God*, Psalm xix. 14.—19. 13. and of their discourses with men, tending to edification: Both are then pleasant, when they come from a pure, a purified heart.

27. He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house: but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, 1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families. *He that is greedy of gain*, and therefore making himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness in pursuit of it; that hurries and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit, he *troubles his own house*, is a burden and vexation to his children and servants. He that in his greediness of gain takes bribes, useth unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, Hab. ii. 9, 10.

2. Those that are generous as well as righteous, entail a blessing upon their families. *He that hateth gifts*, that shaketh his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice, and abhors all sinful indirect ways of getting money; that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis; he shall live, he shall have the comfort of it; he shall live in prosperity and reputation, his name and family shall live and continue.

28. The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, 1. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue well; he that doth so, *the same is a perfect man*, Jam. iii. 2. It is a part of the character of a righteous man, that, being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and ill influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly, it is his *heart* that answers, i. e. he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise, he *speaks the truth in his heart*, Psalm xv. 2. and of speaking pertinently and profitably, and therefore he *studies to answer*, that his speech may be with grace, Neh. ii. 4—v. 7.

2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he saith, but his *mouth pours out evil things*, to the dishonour of God and reproach, and his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

29. The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that sets him at distance. *The wicked say to the Almighty depart from us*, and he is accordingly far from them: he doth not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in time of their need: They shall be for ever banished from his presence, and he will be old them afar off. *Depart from me, ye cursed.*

2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy, who draw nigh to him in a way of duty. *He heareth the prayer of the righteous*, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. *It is the prayer of a righteous man that availeth much*, James v. 16. *He is nigh to them*, a present help in all that they call upon him for.

30. The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.

Two things are here pronounced pleasant.

1. It is pleasant to have a good prospect, to see the light of the sun, Eccles. xi. 7. and by it to see the wonderful works of God, with which this lower world is beautified and enriched; those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would the light of the eyes rejoice their hearts! the consideration of which should make us thankful for our eye-sight.

2. Is is more pleasant to have a good name, a name for good things with God and good people; this is *as precious ointment*, Eccles. vii. 1. *It maketh the bones fat*, it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening: It is also very comfortable to hear (as some understand it) a good report concerning others: a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in the truth.

31. The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproofed, and therefore chooseth to converse with those that both by their words and examples will show him what is amiss in him. *The ear that can take the reproof*, will love the reproof. Faithful, friendly reproofs are here called *the reproofs of life*, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal, and we must reprove with our lives as well as by our doctrine, but because where they are well taken they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life; and, (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard or be influenced by.

2. Those that are so wise as to hear reproof well, will thereby be made wiser, Prov. ix. 9. and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. They that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well and rule well.

32. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof, getteth understanding.

See here, 1. The folly of those that will not be taught, that *refuse instruction*, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not head it, but turn their hearts against it. They *refuse correction* marg. they will not take it, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. They that do so *despise their own souls*, they shew that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason, and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls, therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be proved; *he that heareth reproof* and amends the faults he is reproofed for, he *getteth understanding*; by which his soul is secured from bad ways, and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences a value he has for his own soul, and puts true honour upon it.

33. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom: and before honour is humility.

See here, how much it is our interest as well as duty,

1. To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him. *The fear of the Lord*, as it is the beginning of wisdom, so it is the instruction and correction of wisdom: the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels, and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.

2. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility, there is a happy preface of honour, and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

C H A P. XVI.

1. THE preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

As we read this it teacheth us a great truth, that were we not sufficient of ourselves to speak or think any thing of ourselves that is wise and good, but all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13. Psalm x. 17. But most read it otherwise; the preparations of the heart is in man, he may contrive and design this and the other, but the answer of the tongue, not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do, is of the Lord. This, in short,

1. *Man purposeth*; he hath a freedom of thought, and a freedom of will permitted him; let him form his projects and lay his schemes as he thinks best: but after all,

2. *God disposeth*; he cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who made man's mouth and teaches us what he shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often doth, cross men's purposes and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

2. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves. *All the ways of a man*, all his designs, all his doings are clean in his own eyes, and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart: but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

2. The judgment of God concerning us we are sure is according to truth; he weighs the spirits in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passeth a judgment upon us accordingly, and writes *Tekel* upon that which passed our scale with approbation, weighed in the balance and found wanting; and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways, but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Note, 1. It is a very desirable thing to have our thoughts established, and not tossed and put into a hurry by disquieting cares and fears; to go in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed or put out of frame by any event or change; to be satisfied that all shall work for good, and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

2. The only way to have our thoughts established, is to commit our works to the Lord. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon and submission to the conduct of that grace, 2 Tim. i. 12. all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise and gracious disposal of that providence. Roll thy works upon the Lord, so the word is; roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God: lay the matter before him by prayer, make known thy works unto the Lord, so some read it, not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him; *the will of the Lord be done*. We may then be easy, when we resolve that what ever pleaseth God shall please us.

4. The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note, 1. That God is the first cause, he is the former of all things and all persons, the fountain of being; he gave every creature the being it has, and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are its creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they now fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore though he made them he will not save them.

2. That God is the last end. All is of him and from him, and therefore all

all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will, and for his praise he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his design; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he forefaw would be wicked, yet he made them, *Gen. vii. 6.* because he knew how to get him honour upon them. See *Rom. ix. 22.* Or as some understand it, he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgment on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand, *Psal. xvii. 13, 14. flagellum Dei.* The king of Babylon is called his servant.

5. Every one *that is* proud in heart, is an abomination to the LORD; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note, 1. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that being high in estate is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his carriage towards God and man, let him know, that though he admires himself, and others care for him, yet he is an abomination to the Lord; the great God despiseth him, the holy God detests him.

2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with both hands, though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment; *woe unto him that strives with his Maker, Prov. xi. 21.*

6. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

See here, 1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us; by the mercy and truth of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing; the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator; by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright; by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon, and a necessary qualification for it. By these, and not by the legal sacrifices, *Micah vi. 7, 8.*

2. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of mercy and truth commanding in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out; so we may take the former part; however, by the fear of the Lord, and the influence of that fear, men depart from evil; they will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7. When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, 1. God can turn foes into friends when he pleaseth; he that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits, and power over them, working invisibly but irresistibly upon them, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him, change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enmities, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

2. He will do it for us when we please him; if we make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in this love, he will incline those that had been envious towards us and vexations to us, to entertain a good opinion of us, and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular loving kindness to them, is enough to recommend them to the respects of all, even of those that had been most prejudiced against them.

8. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right:

Here, 1. It is supposed, that an honest, good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world, all the righteous are not rich; that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest; though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, *Prov. xxx. 9.* yet not an invincible one. And that it is possible a man may grow rich for a while by fraud and oppression, may have great revenues, and those got and kept without right, may have no good title to them, nor make any good use of them.

2. It is maintained, that a small estate, honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfulness, and puts to a right use, is much better, and more valuable than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-kept, or ill-spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good, it will last longer, and will turn to a better account in the great day; when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

9. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us,

1. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself; his heart deviseth his way, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures who are governed by sense and natural instinct cannot do. The more shame for him if he do not devise the way how to please God, and provide for his everlasting state.

2. But as a depending creature that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker; if men devise their way, so as to make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, they may expect that he will direct their steps by his spirit and grace, so as that they shall not miss their way, nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs never so politically, and with never so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes directs their steps to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, *If the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that, James iv. 14, 15.* And to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take; *Lord direct my way, 1 Thess. ii. 11.*

10. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings and all in authority, that a divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and

in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither their mouth may transgress, *1 Tim. ii. 1* But it is often otherwise; and therefore,

1. It may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth, to be wise and instructed; let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience as that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do: and that they are guided by principles supernatural; let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station, and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king, God gave him another spirit.

3. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this, he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him. See *1 Kings iii. 28.*

11. A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.

Note, 1. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, *Rom. xii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.*

2. The observation of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him. He has also appointed by his law that they be just; it is therefore a great affront to him and to his government to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

12. It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

Here is, 1. The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the vice-roys under him. A good king not only does justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise; he hates the thought of doing wrong and perverting justice; not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though having power he might easily and safely do it.

2. The comfort of a good king; his throne is established by righteousness. He that makes a conscience of using his power aright, shall find that to be the best security of his government; both as it will oblige people, make them easy and keep them in the interests of it; and it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne, and a strong guard about it.

13. Righteous lips are the delight of kings: and they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a farther character of good kings, that they love and delight in those that speak right, i. e.

1. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them, and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light, and nothing disguised, *Prov. xxix. 12.*

2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too: which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governor sent by him, *1 Pet. ii. 14.* A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak right, and to the purpose.

14. The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it. 15. In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses shew the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary; whom they would they slew, and whom they would they kept alive; their will was a law; we have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

1. How formidable the wrath of a king is, it is as messengers of death, the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman; an angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck as great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. And he must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify it with a word fitly spoken; as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David; *1 Sam. xix. 6.* A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments.

2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead, if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is a cloud of the latter rain, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath; but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour better than life; and therefore they are fools, who to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

16. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold; *ch. iii. 14—viii. 19.* but he speaks it with assurance that it is much better, beyond expression, with admiration, *how much better!* amazed at the disproportion;

proportion; with an appeal to men's consciences, judge in yourselves how much better it is; and with an addition to the same purpose, that *understanding is rather to be chosen than silver*, and all the treasures of kings and their favourites.

Note, 1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favour. God only of common providence. Grace is for ourselves, gold for others. Grace for the soul and eternity, gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

2. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it, but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom, *great peace have they that love it*.

17. The high-way of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Note, 1. It is the way of the upright to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it and leads towards it; and this is a highway marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us: it is easy to hit, and safe to be travelled in like a highway, *Isa. xxxv. 8. To depart from evil is understanding*.

2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be put out of the possession of them; especially that they may not perish for ever, *Matth. xvi. 26*. And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not to turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press towards perfection. They that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

18. Pride goeth before destruction: and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Note, 1. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a *haughty spirit*, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God, and disquiet others, they will be brought down, either by repentance or ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, *Job xl. 11, 12*. It is the act of justice, that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but either admire it or fear it, and therefore God will take the punishing of it into his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

2. Many times proud men are most proud, and insolent, and haughty just before their destruction; so that it is a certain preface that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, that is a sign they are at the door; witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. *While the word was in the king's mouth*, *Dan. iv. 31*. therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear it in ourselves.

19. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand, and will not subscribe to; that it is better to be poor and humble, than to be rich and proud.

1. They that divide the spoil are commonly proud, they value themselves and despise others, and their mind riseth with their condition: those therefore that are rich in this world, have need to be charged that they be not high-minded, *1 Tim. vi. 17*. and those that are proud, and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and shove, and scramble for preferment, are the men that commonly divide the spoil, and share it among them; they have the word at will, and the ball at their foot.

2. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world, yet while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness, which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man's enemy, and the devil his master.

20. He that handleth a matter wisely, shall find good: and who so trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

Note, 1. Prudence gains men respect and success. He that handles a matter wisely, that is master of his trade, and makes it to appear he understands what he undertakes, that is considerate in his affairs, and when he speaks or writes of any subject, doth it pertinently, he shall find good, shall come into good repute, and perhaps may make a good hand of it.

2. But it is piety only that will secure men's true happiness. They that handle a matter wisely, if they are proud and lean to their own understanding, though they may find some good, yet they will have no great satisfaction in it, but he that trusteth in the Lord, and not in his own wisdom, happy is he, and shall speed better at last. Some read the former part of the verse, so as to expound it of piety, which is indeed true wisdom; he that attends to the word, i. e. the word of God, (*chap. xiii. 13*.) he shall find good in it and good by it. And who so trusteth in the Lord, i. e. in his word which he attends to, is happy.

21. The wise in heart shall be called prudent, and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Note, 1. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation, and they shall be called prudent, grave men, and a deference will be paid to their judgment. Do that which is wise and good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

2. Those that with their wisdom have a happy elocution, that deliver themselves easily and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom, and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense, they increase learning, they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add doctrine, improve sciences, and do service to the commonwealth of learning. To him that has and useth what he hath, more shall be given.

22. Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Note, 1. There is always some good to be gotten by a wife and good man, his understanding is a well-spring of life to him, which always flows, and can never be drawn dry; he has something to say upon all occasions that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old, to bring out of his treasure; at least, it is a spring of life to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; with his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself if not others.

2. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool; even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he doth his best, it is but folly, in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table, than a fool in Moses's seat.

23. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Solomon had commended eloquence, and the sweetness of the lips, *ver. 21*. and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself as it were, and shews that unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence, it is worth little: wisdom in the heart is the main matter.

1. That is it that directs us in speaking; that teacheth the mouth what to speak, and when, and how; so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; which if it be not, though the language be never so fine, it had better be unsaid.

2. That is it that gives weight to what we speak, and adds learning to it; strength of reason, and force of argument; without which, let a thing be never so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered; as trifling, quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that; to which wisdom in the heart is necessary.

24. Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The pleasant words here commended must be those which the heart of the wise teacheth, and adds learning to, *ver. 23*. words of seasonable advice, instruction and comfort: words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account *sweeter than honey*, and the honey-comb, *Psalms xix. 10*. These words, to those that know how to relish them,

1. Are toothsome; they are like the honey-comb, *sweet to the soul*, which tastes in them that the Lord is gracious; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, *Psalms cxix. 103*.

2. They are wholesome; many things are pleasant that are not profitable; but these pleasant words are health to the bones, to the inward man, as well as *sweet to the soul*; they make the bones, which sin hath broken and put out of joint, to rejoice. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is the means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This we had before, *chap. xiv. 12*. but here it is repeated, as that which is very necessary to be thought of;

1. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concern of our souls, by resting in that which seems right, and is not really so; and for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in self-examination, and to keep up a jealousy over ourselves.

2. By ways of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

26. He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us; what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might; both in our worldly business, and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, *The soul that laboureth, laboureth for itself*. It is the heart-work that is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us;

1. As that which will be absolutely needful; our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing; and require constant relief, so that we must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, *2 Thess. iii. 10*.

2. As that which will be unspeakably gainful; we know on whose errand we go; he that laboureth, shall reap the fruit of his labour, it shall be for himself, he shall rejoice in his own work, and eat the labour of his hands. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. 28. A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others: and they are the worst of men; two sorts, such are here described.

1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations. They dig up evil, they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it, they will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back; or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced invidious. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter, there is as a fire, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and fally it, but as a burning fire to consume it: and how great a matter doth a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished? *James iii. 5, 6*.

2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides which will set those at variance that are most nearly related and have been long intimate: or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another. A froward man, that cannot find in his heart to love any one but himself, is vexed to see others

others live in love, and therefore makes it his business to *show strife*, by giving men base characters, one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill natured stories between *chief friends*, so as to *separate* them one from another, and make them angry at, or at least suspicious of, one another. Those are ill men, and ill women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is not good*. 30. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them, nor have any thing to do with them.

1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents. They are *violent men*, that do all by rapine and oppression, that *shut their eyes*, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind to *devise froward things*, to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually and yet securely to themselves and then *moving their lips*, giving the word of command to their agents, they *bring the evil to pass*, and accomplish the wicked device, *biting his lips*, so some read it, for vexation: When *the wicked plots against the just*, he *gnasheth upon him with his teeth*.

2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to *entice* and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, *leading them in a way that is not good*, neither honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be in the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some by bringing them into trouble in this world, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31. The hoary head *is* a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note. 1. It ought to be the great care of old people to be *found in the way of righteousness*, the way of religion and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom: let them therefore be found in that way: Death will come, the Judge is coming, *the Lord is at hand*; that they may be *found of him in peace*, let them be *found in the way of righteousness*, 2 Pet. iii. 14. *found so doing*, Matt. xxiv. 46. Let old people be old disciples, let them persevere to the end *in the way of righteousness*, which they long since set out in, that they may be then found in it.

2. If old people be *found in the way of righteousness*, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect; *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head*, Lev. xix. 32. but if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned and laid in the dust, *Ish. lxx. 20*. Old people, therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their grey hairs are indeed *a crown* to them; they are *worthy of double honour*. Grace is the glory of old age.

32. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly *the hoary head*, ver. 31. Observe,

1. The nature of it. It is to be *slow to anger*, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation; taking time to consider, before we suffer our passion to break out. that it may not transgress due bounds: so slow in our motion towards anger, as that we may be presently stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be *lords of our anger*, as God is, *Nah. i. 2*. *Aebulus fit affluum tuorum*.

2. The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions, he is *better than the mighty*, better than he that by a long siege takes a city, or by a long war subdues a country: Behold a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here! the conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true conduct, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining a victory over the forces of an enemy: A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one: It is a victory that doth no body any harm, no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home, than to resist an invasion from abroad; nay, such are the gains of meekness, that by it we are *more than conquerors*.

33. The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Note. 1. The divine providence orders and directs those things which are to us perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by blind fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in, God has both.

2. When solemn appeals are made to providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright, *Give a perfect lot*, 1 Sam. xiv. 41. Acts i. 24. and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed; being satisfied that the hand of God is in it, and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of providence concerning our affairs, we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

C H A P. XVII.

BBETTER is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.

These words recommend family love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life.

1. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vying in mutual endearments, and ready to make themselves easy and obliging to one another, live very comfortably, though they are low in the world, work hard, and fare hard; though they have but each of them *a morsel*, and that *a dry morsel*: There may be peace and quietness where there is not three meals a day, provided there be a joint satisfaction in God's providence, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage.

2. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dishes, *a house full of sacrifices*, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them and what they have, nor can they have any true rest of their enjoyments, much less any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten *a dry morsel*, but *strife* will sour and embitter *a house full of sacrifices*: A little of the heaven of malice will heaven all the enjoyments.

2. A wife servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame: and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note. 1. True merit doth not go by dignity: All agree, that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant, *John viii. 35*. and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wife, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burden and shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abram could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family when he was sent to get a wife for Isaac; whereas Ishmael a son, was a shame to it, when he mocked Isaac.

2. True dignity will go by merit: If a servant be wife, and manage things well, he shall be farther trusted, and not only *have rule* with, but *rule over a son that causeth shame*, for God and nature have designed, that *the fool shall be servant to the wife in heart*. Nay, a prudent servant may perhaps come to have such an interest in his master, as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate, and to *have part of the inheritance among the brethren*.

3. The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Note. 1. The hearts of the children of men are subject, not only to God's view, but to his judgment: As *the fining pot is for silver*, both to prove it, and to improve it, so *the Lord tries the hearts*; both searcheth whether they are standard or no, and those that are, refines them and makes them purer, *Jer. xvii. 10*. God tries the heart by affliction, *Psal. lxxvi. 10, 11*. and often chooseth his people in that furnace, *Ish. xlviii. 10*. as 1 makes them his choice.

2. It is God only that *tries the hearts*, men may try their *silver and gold* with the *fining pot and the furnace*, but they have no such way of trying one another's hearts: God only doth that, who is both the searcher and the sovereign of the heart.

4. A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips: and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Note. 1. Those that design to do ill support themselves by falsehood and lying. *A wicked doer gives ear*, with a great deal of pleasure, to *false lips*, that will justify him in the ill he doth. Those that aim to make public disturbances, catch greedily at libels and false stories, that defame the government and the administration.

2. Those that take the liberty to tell lies, take a pleasure in hearing them told: *A liar gives heed* to a malicious backbiting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth, and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another's hands; and these shew they are bad themselves, who court the acquaintance, and need the assistance of those that are bad.

5. Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.

See here, 1. What a great sin they are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants, and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with it, and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them; they *reproach their Maker*, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to that condition they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can when he pleaseth reduce us to that condition. And let those that thus reproach their Maker, know they shall be called to an account for it, *Matth. xxv. 41*. *Prov. xv. 31*.

2. What great danger they are in of falling into trouble themselves, who are pleased to see and hear the troubles of others. *He that is glad at calamities*, that he may be built up upon the ruin of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God, when they are abroad, let him know that he *shall not go unpunished*, the cup shall be put into their hand, *Ezek. xxv. 6, 7*.

6. Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so; if they carry themselves worthily they are so.

1. It is an honour to parents when they are old, to leave children, and *children's children*, growing up, that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children's children, *Psal. cxxxviii. Gen. i. 23*. to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God; this crowns and completes their comfort in this world.

2. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them, even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world: those are unnatural children, who reckon their aged parents a burden to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be, that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7. Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd:

1. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them, and which they were never cut out for. A fool in Solomon's proverbs signifies a wicked man; whom excellent speech doth not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have they to do to declare God's statutes who *hate instruction*, Psa. l. 16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say that they knew him to be the Son of God. See *Act. xvi. 17, 18.*

2. That men of great repute should be deceivers. If it be unbecoming a despicable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and nobody heeds him, being prejudiced again his character, much more unbecoming it is for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage from his character, and the confidence that is put in him, to lie and dissemble and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince; so corrupt is the modern policy, which insinuates, that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words farther than is for their interest, and *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare.*

8. A gift is as a precious stone, in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to shew,

1. That those that have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a *precious stone*, and value themselves by it as if it gave them not only ornament but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond, they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all and make them do just what they would have them do in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause; see high and you may have what you will.

2. That those that have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it. *A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it*, it has a great influence on him, and he will be sure to go the way that leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice, and not consistent with himself.

9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love: but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends.

Note, 1. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours is to make the best of every thing; not to tell others what has been said or done against them, when it is not at all necessary to their safety; nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but excuse both and put the best constructions upon them. It was an oversight, therefore overlook it; it was done through forgetfulness, therefore forget it; it perhaps made nothing of you, do you make nothing of it.

2. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love, and nothing tends more to the separating of friends and setting them at variance, than the repeating matters that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated, and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10. A reproof entereth more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Note, 1. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a mighty influence upon him, for if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it.

2. Stripes are not enough for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors, that he may repent of them; and be more cautious for the future. He that is foolish and wilful, it is very rare that severity doth him any good. David is softened with, *Thou art the man*, but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11. An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an ill man.

1. His sin: he is an ill man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel against God, and the government God hath set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him. *Querit jurgia*, so some. There are some that are actuated by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction sake; that will go on frowardly in their wicked ways in spite of all restraint and check. *A rebellious man seeketh mischief*, so some read it, watcheth all opportunities to disturb the public peace.

2. His punishment: therefore, because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, *a cruel messenger shall be sent against him*; some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God: Angels, God's messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, Psa. lxxxviii. 49. Satan, the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him, and the messengers of Satan. His prince shall send a serjeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that *kicks against the pricks* is waited for of the sword.

12. Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

Note, 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion ungoverned, and he is a *fool in his folly*. They are fools in whose bosom anger rests, and in whose countenance anger rageth: He has put off man, and is become like a bear, a raging bear, a bear robbed of her whelps; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps, (which, though ugly, are her own) as eager in pursuit of them, as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.

2. He is a dangerous man, falls foul on every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as a robber. *Ira furor brevis est*. One may easier stop, escape or guard against an enraged bear, than an outrageous, angry man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions, lest they get head and do mischief, and so consult our own honour: and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. *Currenti cede furori.*

13. Who rewardeth evil for good; evil shall not depart from his house.

A malicious, mischievous man is here represented,

1. As ungrateful to his friends; he oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindnesses done him, that he renders *evil for good*. David met with those that were his adversaries for his love, Psa. cix. 4. To render *evil for evil* is brutish, but to render *evil for good* is devilish. He is an ill-natured man, that, because he is resolved not to return a kindness, will revenge it.

2. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it; this is a crime so heinous, that it shall be punished not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. *The sword shall not depart from David's house*, because he rewarded Uriah with evil for his good services. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works, therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.

Here is, 1. The danger that there is in the *beginning of strife*; one hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction, begets another, and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam; when the water has got a little passage, it doth itself widen the breach, bears down all before it, and there is no stopping it, no reducing it then.

2. A good caution inferred from thence to take heed of the first spark of contention, and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice, for if once broke it will break farther; therefore leave it off, not only when you see the worst of it, for then it may be too late, but when you see the first off; *obsta principiis*; leave it off even before it be meddled with; leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just; even they both are abomination to the LORD.

This shews what an offence it is to God,

1. When those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors counsel, do either acquit the guilty, or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either; this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good, and punish the bad, Rom. xiii. 3, 4. It is equally provoking to God to *justify the wicked*, though it be in piety, and *in favorem vite*, as to *condemn the just*.

2. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse for wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so *pervert the right ways of the Lord*, and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

16. Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

Two things are here spoken of with admiration:

1. God's great goodness to foolish man, in putting a *price into his hand to get wisdom*: to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both worlds. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the stirrings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer, we have time and opportunity; he that has a good estate (so some understand it) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom by purchasing instruction: Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom: It is a *price* therefore of value, a talent; it is a *price in the hand*, in possession, *the word is nigh thee*; it is a *price* for getting; it is for our own advantage, it is for getting wisdom that very thing which, being fools we have most need of. We have reason to admire that God should so consider our necessity, and should intrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them.

2. Man's great badness, his neglect of God's favour and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable; *he has no heart to it*, not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the *price*, in the use of which it may be got. *He has no heart*, no skill, nor will, nor courage, to improve his advantages. He hath set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty, or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it.

17. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

This speaks the strength of those bonds by which we are obliged to each other, and which we ought to be sensible of.

1. Friends must be constant to each other at all times; it is not true friendship that is not constant, it will be so if it be sincere, and acted by a good principle. They that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship, will love no longer than their humour is pleased, and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind, and change with the weather; swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, and generous, and cordial, if I love my friend because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continue so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I will love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times, John xiii. 1. and we must so love him, Rom. viii. 35.

2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction. *A brother is born* to succour a brother or sister in distress to whom he is joined so close, by nature that he may the more sensibly feel from their burdens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct to help them. We must often consider what we were *born for*, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation: *Who knows but we came into such a family, for such a time as this?* We do not answer the end of our relations, if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus: *A friend that loves at all times is born*, i. e. becomes a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

18. A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though he had recommended friendship in adversity, ver. 17. yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their

their families, and wrong them; one part of our duty must be made to consist with another.

Note, 1. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread suretyship: there may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself; but to be *surety in the presence of his friend*, when he is upon the spot, supposeth that his own word will not be taken, he being deemed insolvent, or dishonest, and then who can with safety pass his word for him.

2. Those that are *void of understanding* are commonly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their own affairs, but to be under conduct.

19. He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

Note, 1. Those that are quarrelsome involve themselves in a great deal of guilt. *He that loves strife*, that in his worldly business loves to go to law, in religion loves controversies, and in common converse loves to thwart and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the fire, *he loves transgression*; for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin which God hates.

2. Those that are ambitious and aspiring expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as many times end in their ruin. *He that exalteth his gate*, builds a stately house, at least a fine front-piece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, he seeks his own destruction, and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself; he makes his gate so large, that his house and estate go out at it.

20. He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Note, 1. Framing ill designs will be of no advantage to us, there is nothing got by them. *He that hath a froward heart*, that sows discord, and is full of resentment, he cannot promise himself to get by it, sufficient to balance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it; he *finds no good*.

2. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us. *He that has a perverse tongue*, spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or back-biting, *falls into one mischief or other*; loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble upon his own head; many a one has paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

21. He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

This speaks that very emphatically, which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous, vexatious thing it is to have a foolish, wicked child. See here,

1. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. There was *joy when a man child was born into the world*, and yet if he prove vicious, his own father wisheth he had never been born: The name of Absalom signifies his father's peace, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delight of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case, that if his son be a fool, he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather, because Adam begets a son in his own likeness.

2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction, and that of an unwelcome child as likely as any other, to drown the sense of a thousand mercies. *The father of a fool*, lays that so much to heart, that he *has no joy of any thing else*; for which he may thank himself; there are joys sufficient to balance even that sorrow.

22. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, 1. It is healthy to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided not only meat but medicine for it, and has here told us the best medicine is a *merry heart*, not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth; Solomon himself said of that mirth, it is not medicine but madness, it is not food, but poison: *What doth it?* But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness; and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful, and cause to be cheerful; especially, if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. *This doeth good to a medicine*, so some read it, *i. e.* it will make physic work the better. Or, *it doth good as a medicine* to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But if mirth be a medicine, (understand it of diversion and recreation) it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally, *sub regimine*, and by rule.

2. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickness of the body. *A broken spirit*, sunk by the burden of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, *dries the bones*, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble, as well as into temptation.

23. A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, 1. What an ill thing bribery is. *He is a wicked man that will take a gift* to engage him to give false testimony, verdict, or judgment, and when he doth it he is ashamed of it, for he takes it with all the secrecy imaginable out of the bosom where he knows it is laid ready for him: it is inauspiciously concealed, and so sly, that if he could he would hide it from his own conscience. *A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man*, so some read it; for he is an ill man that gives bribes as well as he that takes them.

2. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force, that it *perverts the ways of judgment*. The course of justice is not only obstructed, but turned into injustice; and the greatest wrongs are done under colour of doing right.

24. Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Note, 1. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man, that not only hath wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his *wisdom before him*, as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he has it *before him*, it is not to seek, but still at hand.

2. He that has a giddy head, a roving, rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool and good for nothing, whose *eyes are in the ends of the earth*, here and there and every where; any where but where they should be; that cannot fix his thoughts to one subject, nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business, it is filled with a thousand things foreign and impertinent.

25. A foolish son is a grief to his father, and a bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, 1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to their father (so the word signifies) because they contemn his authority; but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents being joint sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief.

2. That Solomon often repeats that remark, probably because it was his own case, however it is a common case.

26. Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, (and such differences often arise)

1. Let magistrates see to it that they never *punish the just*, that they be in no case a terror to good works, for that is to abuse their power, and betray the great trust which is reposed in them. It is *not good*, *i. e.* it is a very ill thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes become tyrants and persecutors, their thrones will be neither easy nor firm.

2. Let subjects see to it, that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is an ill thing to *strike princes for equity*; by defaming their administration, or any secret attempts against them to strike at them; as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, *not to strike the ingenuous for equity*, magistrates must take heed that none suffer under them for well doing; nor must parents *provoke their children to wrath* by unjust rebukes.

27. He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Two ways a man may shew himself to be a wise man.

1. By the good temper of his mind, the sweetness and sedateness of that. *A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit*, a precious spirit, so the word is, he is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as it should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself and pleasant to others. A precious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable and more excellent than his neighbour. He is of a cool spirit, so some read it, not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the impetus of any corrupt affliction, but even and stayed. A cool head, with a warm heart is an admirable composition.

2. By the good government of his tongue.

1. A wise man will be of few words, as being afraid of speaking amiss. *He that hath knowledge*, and aims to do good with it, is careful when he doth speak, to speak to the purpose, and therefore saith little, that he may take time to deliberate upon it. He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill spent.

2. This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom, that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man, if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary; and because it will be thought, that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience; and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men's good opinion, and to impose upon them. But when a *fool holds his peace*, God knows his heart and the folly that is bound there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgments of men.

C H A P. XVIII.

1. THROUGH desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult, and differently understood.

1. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity; when men take a pride in *separating themselves* from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them, and advancing new notions of their own, which though never so absurd, they are wedded to; it is to gratify a desire of lust or vain-glory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which doth not belong to them; he *seeketh according to his desire*, and *intermeddleth with every business* pretends to pass a judgment upon every man's matter; he is morose and supercilious; those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, that they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others.

Our translation seems to take it as an excitement to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge and grace we must *desire* it, as that which we need, and will be of great advantage to us, 1 Cor. xii. 31. We must *separate ourselves* from all those things which would divert us from, or retard us in the pursuit, retire out of the noise of this world's vanities, and then *seek and intermeddle with all the means and instructions of wisdom*; be willing to take pains and try all the methods of improving ourselves, be acquainted with a variety of opinions, that we may prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.

2. A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek and intermeddle with the means of it; but,

1. He has no true delight in it; it is only to please his friends, or save his credit, but he doth not love his book, nor love his business, nor love his bible, nor love his prayers, he would rather be playing the fool with his sports; those that take no pleasure in learning, or religion, will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them, if they are a task and a drudgery.

2. He has no good design in it, only *that his heart may discover itself*, i. e. that he may have something to make a shew with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that that may pass off the better, because he loves to hear himself talk.

3. When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

This may include a double sense:

1. That wicked people are scornful people, and put *contempt* upon others: when the wicked come into any company, come into the schools of wisdom, or into the assemblies of religious worship, *then cometh contempt of God, and his people and ministers*, of every thing that is said and done; you can expect no other from those that are profane, but that they will be scoffers; they will be an *ignominy* and *reproach*, they will flout and jeer every thing that is serious and grave, but let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients saith, *such wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*.

2. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring *contempt* upon themselves, for God hath said, that those *who despise him shall be lightly esteemed*. As soon as ever sin entered, shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring *ignominy* and *reproach* upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are any way related to them. Those therefore who would secure their honour must retain their virtue.

4. The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed.

1. The *well spring of wisdom* is *as deep waters*, i. e. an intelligent knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnisheth him with something to say upon all occasions that is pertinent and profitable: This is *as deep waters*, which make no noise, but never run dry.

2. The words of such man's mouth are as a *flowing brook*, what he sees cause to speak flows naturally from him, and with a great deal of ease and freedom, and natural fluency: it is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing, from his *deep waters*, there flows what there is occasion for to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5. It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

This justly condemns those who being employed in the administration of justice, *pervert judgment*.

1. By conniving at men's crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity and wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them. Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly *it is not good thus to accept the person of the wicked*, it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.

2. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country. This is *overthrowing the righteous in judgment*, who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. 7. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Solomon has often shewed what mischief bad men do to others, with their ungoverned tongues, here he shews what mischief they do to themselves.

1. They embroil themselves in quarrels. *A fool's lips*, without any cause or call, *enter into contention*, by advancing foolish notions which others find themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun: or by giving provoking language, which will be resented and satisfaction demanded: or by setting men at defiance, and bidding them *do if they dare*, proud men and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools, whose lips *enter into contention*. A wise man may against his will, be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late.

2. They expose themselves to correction. The fool's *mouth* doth, in effect, *call for strokes*, he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes, and is still saying that which needs to be checked and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be *smitten on the mouth*.

3. They involve themselves in ruin. *A fool's mouth*, which has been, or would have been the destruction of others, proves at length *his own destruction*, perhaps from men; Shimei's mouth was his own destruction, and Adonijah's, who spoke against his own head: and when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a premunire, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he hath said, his defence proves his offence, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, intangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar, their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort to *cool their tongue*, which is their snare, and will be their tormentor.

8. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Tale-bearers are those that secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told,

or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance: now the words of such as are here said to be,

1. *Like as when men are wounded*, so the margin reads it; they take on them to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctance imaginable that they speak of them, they look as if they themselves were wounded by it; whereas really they *rejoice in iniquity*, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem, but they *go down as poison into the innermost parts of the belly*, the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared.

2. *As wounds*, so the text reads it; as deep wounds, deadly wounds, *wounds in the innermost parts of the belly*: the *Venter medius*, or *infinus*, the *thorax*, or the *abdomen*, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the tale-bearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest, and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity; they occasion sin to him, which is a wound to the conscience; perhaps he seems to flight them, but they wound insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

9. He also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note, 1. Prodigality is very ill husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are intrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so in effect throw away what they have, and suffer it to run to waste.

2. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose hands *hang down*, (so the word signifies) that stands, as we say, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, doth it not at all, or as if he did it not; he is own brother to him that is a prodigal, i. e. he is as much a fool, and in as sure and ready a way to poverty, one scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing is brother to him that doth not pray or hear at all; and omissions of duty, and in duty, are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10. The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe.

Here is, 1. God's sufficiency for the saints. His name is a *strong tower* for them, in which they may take rest when they are weary, and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies, and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times; the wealth laid up in this tower it is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast, and a continuing treasure to them; the strength of this tower is enough to protect them; the name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God, not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it; these make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable for all God's people.

2. The saints' security in God. It is a strong tower to those who know how to make use of it as such, the righteous by faith and prayer, devotion towards God, and dependance on him, run into it as their city of refuge; having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it; they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God, and God in them, and so they are safe, they do think themselves, and they shall find themselves so.

11. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man, ver. 10. here he shews what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them; his wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it as a godly man from his God.

See 1. How he supports himself; he makes his wealth his city where he dwells, where he rules with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his *strong city*, in which he intrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him; *his scales are his pride*. His wealth is his wall in which he encloseth himself, and he thinks it a *high wall*, which cannot be scaled or got over, Job xxxi. 24. Rev. xviii. 7.

2. How herein he cheats himself; it is a *strong city*, and a *high wall*, but it is so only in his own conceit, it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

12. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

Note, 1. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride; for *before destruction*, men are commonly so inflated by the just judgment of God, that they are more haughty than ever; that their ruin may be the sorer, and the more surprising. Or if that do not always hold, yet after the heart has been lifted up with pride a fall comes, chap. xvi. 18.

2. Humility is the presage of honour, and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, chap. xv. 33. That has need to be often said which men are so loth to believe.

13. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing with which they hope to gain applause.

1. Some take a pride in being quick, they answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take a thing presently, and when they have heard one side, think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other, they are already apprised of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas that though a ready wit is a pretty thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound that doth business.

2. Those that take a pride in being quick, commonly fall under the just reproach

reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he doth not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict inquiry into. And if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note, 1. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys itself, and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under, if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience, and the testimony of that he for him; and if the *spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity*, much more will the spirit of a Christian, or rather the Spirit of God witnessing and working with our spirits in the day of trouble.

2. The grievances of the spirit are of all other most heavy, and hardly to be borne; these make the shoulders sore, which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, dejection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief; if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, *who can bear this?* Wounded spirits cannot help themselves, nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep a conscience void of offence.

15. The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge: and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Note, 1. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it. Their ear to attend to the means of knowledge, and their heart to mix faith with what they hear, and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more, and the more prudent a man is, the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God and his duty, and the way to heaven, for that is the best knowledge.

2. Those that prudently seek knowledge, shall certainly get knowledge, for God never said to such, *seek in vain*. *Seek and ye shall find*. If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must not only get knowledge into our heads, but get it into our hearts, get the favour and relish of it, apply what we know to ourselves, and experience the power and influence of it.

16. A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Of what great force gifts, *i. e.* bribes are, he had intimated before, *chap. xvii. 8—23*. Here he shews the power of gifts, *i. e.* presents made even by inferiors to those that are above them, and have much more than they have. A good present will go far,

1. Towards a man's liberty; a man's gift, if he be in prison, may procure his enlargement: there are courtiers, who, if they use their interest even for oppressed innocency, expect to be gratified for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants, or a present to himself; those will make room for him.

2. Towards his preferment. It will bring him to sit among *great men*, in honour and power. See how corrupt this world is, when men's gifts will do that for them, which their merits will not do, though never so great; nay, will gain that for them, which they are unworthy of, and unfit for; and no wonder those take bribes in their offices, who gave bribes for them. *Vendere jura, potest, emerat ille prius.*

17. He that is first in his own cause, seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

This shews that one tale is good till another is told.

1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no.

2. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses and cross-examine them, and shew the falshood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear each side before we give judgment.

18. The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

Note, 1. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right, and stand upon the punctilios of both and are confident of their being able to make their part good, and therefore will hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers.

2. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot, if they cannot otherwise be compromised, and sometimes better so than by arguments which are endless, or concessions which they are loth to stoop to, whereas it is no disparagement to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot, when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels, Canaan was divided by lot; and if lusty lots had not profaned this way of appeal to providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God, and the satisfaction of the parties, provided it be done with prayer and due solemnity; this, and some other scriptures seeming to direct to it, especially *Acts i. 26*. And if the law be a lottery (as some have called it) it were as good a lottery were the law.

19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Note, 1. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligations to each other, not only because they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because between such, things are commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace should indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends if they offend us, but corruption makes it most

difficult to forgive them; let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother; ingratitude is very provoking.

2. Great pains must be taken in compromising matters in variance between relations with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and consequently the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a *brother offended*, and seemed harder to be won than a *strong city*, yet by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer he was won.

20. A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Note, 1. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us, or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as *chap. xx. 27*. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for accordingly will our satisfaction be and our inward peace.

2. The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have, or have not governed our tongues well. According as *the fruit of the mouth* is, good or bad, unto iniquity or unto righteousness, accordingly the character of the man is, and consequently the testimony of his conscience concerning him. "We ought to take as great care about the words we speak, as we do about the fruit of our trees, or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for according as they are wholesome, or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled." So Bishop Patrick.

21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, 1. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or other's death by a false tongue: and on the contrary many a one hath saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved others lives with a seasonable testimony or intercession for them. And if by our words we must be justified or condemned, no doubt, *death and life, are in the power of the tongue*. Tongues are *Æsop's* best meat, and his work.

2. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that doth not only speak aright (which a bad man may do to save his credit, or please his company) but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight, to him it will be life; and he that doth not only speak aright (which a good man may do through inadvertency) but loves to speak so, (*Psal. lii. 4.*) to him it will be death. As men *love it*, they shall eat the fruit of it.

22. Who so findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife, that is, a wife indeed (an ill wife doth not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour) that finds a help mate for him, that is a wife in the original acceptation of the word: that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, he has found a *good thing*, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel he has found, that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven.

2. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour, and happy pledge of farther favours; it is a sign God delights in a man to do him good, and has mercy in store for him. For this therefore God must be sought unto.

23. The poor useth intreaties, but the rich answereth roughly.

Note, 1. Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, yet it has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble and submissive, and mortifies their pride; it teacheth them to use intreaties; when necessity forceth men to beg, it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them, and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use intreaties; not answer, but make application, must sue *sub forma pauperis*.

2. A prosperous condition, though it has many advantages, yet has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, and haughty and imperious. *The rich answers the intreaties of the poor roughly*, as Nabal answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and even where they do not design any rough dealing, yet that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, *James iii. 17*.

24. A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shews,

1. What we must do that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must *shew ourselves friendly*. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so, by all expressions that are endearing; by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them, and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing all the good offices we can, and serving them in every thing that lies in our power, that is *showing ourselves friendly*.

Si vis amari, ama. SEN.

Ut ameris amabilis esto. OVID.

2. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend; a *brother* indeed is *born for adversity*, as he had said, *chap. xvii. 17*, and in our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes *there is a friend* that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and therefore he *sticks closer than a brother*, and when it comes to a pinch, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers, that *sticks closer than a brother*, to him therefore let them shew themselves friendly.

C H A P. XIX.

1. **B**ETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, 1. What will be the credit and comfort of a poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt, and may dispirit him. Let him be honest and walk in integrity, let him keep a good conscience, and make it appear that he doth so, let him always speak and act with sincerity, when he is under the greatest temptations to dissimble and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better beloved, and lives to better purpose than many a one that looks great and makes a figure.

2. What will be the shame of a rich man, Notwithstanding all his pomp, if he have a shallow head, and an ill tongue, if he is *perverse in his lips*, and is a fool, if he is a wicked man, and gets what he has by fraud and oppression, he is a fool, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2. Also that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

Two things are here shewed to be of ill consequence.

1. Ignorance; *to be without the knowledge of the soul is not good*, so some read it; know we not our own selves, our own hearts, *A soul without knowledge is not good*; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man have not understanding he is as the beasts, Psalm xlix. 20. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge is not safe, nor pleasant; what good can the soul do, or what is it good for, if it be without knowledge?

2. Rashness. *He that hasteth with his feet*, that doth things inconsiderately, and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet, he sinneth, he cannot choose but miss it often, and take many a false step, which those prevent that consider their ways. As good not know as not consider.

3. The foolishness of a man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

We have here two instances of men's folly.

1. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves a-ground, and embarrass themselves. *The foolishness of a man perverteth his way*. Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is along of themselves and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them.

2. That when they have done so, they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, whereas really they wrong themselves. In fretting we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in fretting against the Lord, we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; and this is very absurd, that from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness, or neglect; we quarrel with him when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing. See Isa. i. 1.

4. Wealth maketh many friends: but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, 1. We may see how strong men's love of money is, that they will love any man how undeserving soever he may be otherwise, if he has but a deal of money, and is free of it, so that they may hope to be the better off for it. Wealth enables a man to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains him many friends; who pretend to love him, for they flatter him, and make their court to him, but really love what he hath: or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him.

2. We may see how weak men's love of one another is, he that while he prospered was loved and respected, if he fall into poverty, is separated from his neighbour, is not owned or looked upon, not visited or regarded, is bid to keep his distance, and told he is troublesome, even one that has been his neighbour and acquaintance shall turn his face from him, and pass by on the other side; because men's consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse that they did not see them.

5. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Here is, 1. The sins threatened; bearing false witness in judgment, and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness, where to the guilt of a lie is added that of perjury, and injury if they had not advanced to it, by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus men *teach their tongues to speak lies*, Jer. ix. 5. And those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted to it, though they had seemed to detest it. They that can swallow a false word, debauch their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them.

2. The threatening itself; they shall not go unpunished, they shall not escape. This intimates, that which emboldens them in the sin, is hopes of impunity. And that it is a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men though the law was strict, Deut. xix. 18, 19. But it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6. Many will intreat the favour of the prince; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts. 7. All the brethren of the poor do hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

These two verses are a comment upon ver. 4. and shew,

1. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have

suitors, and servants in abundance. The prince that has power in his hand and preferments at his disposal, has his gate crowded, and his anti-chamber thronged with petitioners, that are ready to adore him for what they can get, *many will intreat his favour*, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble supplicants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince. But it should seem liberality will go farther than majesty itself to gain respect, for they are many that court the prince, but *every man is a friend to him that gives gifts*: not only those that have received, or do expect gifts from him, will as friends be ready to serve him, but others also will as friends give him their good word. Prodigals that are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on that will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done; those that are prudently generous, make an interest by it, which may stand them in good stead; they that are accounted benefactors exercise an authority, which may give them any opportunity of doing good, Luke xxii. 25.

2. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. It should not be so, we must honour all men, even under their greatest abasements; men may, if they please, court the prince, and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor, and look at them with disdain; yet so it is, oftentimes *all the brethren of the poor, do hate him*, even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them: and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then, no marvel, if others of his friends that were nothing akin to him go far from him, to get out of his way; *he pursueth them with words*, hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him, but not they, they have nothing for him. *They pursue him with words*, so some understand it, to excuse themselves from giving him any thing; they tell him he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers, *There are many servants now a days that run away from their masters*, and how do I know but David may be one of them? Let poor people, therefore make God their friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

8. He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

They are here encouraged,

1. That take pains to get wisdom, to get knowledge, and grace, and acquaintance with God, they that do so, shew that they love their own souls, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable; no man ever hated his own flesh, but loves that, yet many are wanting in love to their own souls, for those only love their souls, and consequently love themselves aright, that get wisdom, true wisdom.

2. That take care to keep it when they have got it; it is health, and wealth, and honour, and all to the soul, and therefore he that keepeth understanding, as he shews that he loves his own soul, so he shall certainly find good, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, he shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul, and shall be happy here and for ever.

9. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

Here is, 1. A repetition of what was said before, ver. 5. for we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying and false witness-bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence.

2. An addition to it in one word; there it was said, *he that speaks lies shall not escape*, and intimated that he shall be punished. Here it is said his punishment shall be such as will be his destruction, *he shall perish*; the lies he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damning, destroying sin.

10. Delight is not seemly for a fool: much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note, 1. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool: *Delight is not seemly for such a one*: a man that has not wisdom and grace has no right or title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly: those that do not delight in God, it ill becomes them to delight in any thing else: He knows not how to use it, nor how to manage himself in it, and therefore doth but expose himself. It becomes ungracious souls to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business, to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool, that lives an idle life, and abuse his recreations. *The prosperity of fools discovers their folly, and destroys them*.

2. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit. Nothing is more unseemly than for a servant to have rule over princes: it is absurd in itself and very preposterous; for none is so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horse-back, a servant when he reigns, Prov. xxx. 22. It is very unseemly for one that is a servant to sin and his lusts, to rule over and oppress those that are God's free-men, and made kings and priests to him.

11. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger.

1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments. *Discretion teacheth us to defer our anger*; to defer the admission of it, till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light, and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, I would beat thee, but that I am angry. Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to take on him he doth not see it, Psalm xxxviii. 13. or if he sees it to take notice of it, yet to forgive it, and meditate no revenge.

12. The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purpose with what we had, chap. xvi. 14. 15. and the design of it is,

1. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles; they are not like those of common persons, their frowns are very terrible,

terrible, and their smiles very comfortable : and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well with their frowns, nor ever give countenance to a wicked man in doing ill with their smiles, for then they abuse their influence, *Rom. xiii. 3.*

2. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes : let them be restrained from all disloyalty with the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them ; and let them be encouraged in all good services to the public with the hopes of the favour of their prince. Christ is a king, whose wrath against his enemies will be *as the roaring of a lion*, *Rev. x. 3.* and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, *Psal. lxxii. 6.*

13. A foolish son is the calamity of his father : and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife, and good children ; and yet,

1. A foolish son is a great affliction, and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away, and wastes it in the excess of riot ; or that is proud, and soppish, and conceited ; such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin of his family. He hates all his labour when he sees whom he must leave the fruit of it to.

2. A cross peevish wife is as great an affliction. Her contentions are continual, every day, and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make herself and those about her uneasy ; those that are given to chide will never want something or other to chide at ; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in, and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to enable him to bear his affliction, and do his duty, that has a son to his son, and a scold to his wife.

14. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers : and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

Note. 1. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man ; a wife that is prudent, in opposition to one that is contentious, *ver. 13.* For though a wife that is continually finding fault, may think it is her wit and wisdom to be so, it is really her folly : a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of every thing. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice, or his own management, for the wisest have been deceived, both in and by a woman, but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help meet for him, and, perhaps, by some hits and turns of providence, that seemed casual, brought her to him ; every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages we are sure are made in heaven ; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, *Gen. xxiv. 42.*

2. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life, and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the divine providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which by the common direction of providence, comes in course to a man ; but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly, in disposing of their children, look no farther than to match them to house and riches, but if withal it was to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.

15. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep : and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish, slothful disposition :

1. It stupifies men, and makes the senses and mindless of their own affairs, as if they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. Slothful people doze away their time, bury their talents, live a useless life, and are the unprofitable burdens of the earth ; for any service they do when they are awake, they had as good be always asleep. Even their souls are idle and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen.

2. It impoverisheth men, and brings them to want : they that will not labour cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger. An idle soul, i. e. one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or pains to work out his salvation ; shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16. He that keepeth the commandment, keepeth his own soul : but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

Here is, 1. The happiness of those that walk circumspectly. They that make conscience of keeping the commandment in every thing, that live by rule, as become servants and patients, they keep their own souls, they secure their present peace and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful.

2. The misery of those that live at large, and never mind what they do : They that despise their way shall die, shall perish eternally, they are in the high road to ruin. Those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whether they are going ; and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts, and after the course of the world, *Eccles. xi. 9.* that never consider what they have done, or what they are concerned to do, but walk at all adventures, *Lev. xxvi. 21.* right or wrong, it is all one to them ; what can come of this but the greatest mischief ?

17. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD ; - and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Here is, 1. The duty of charity described. It includes two things : (1.) Compassion ; which is the inward principle of charity in the heart ; it is to have pity on the poor ; those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have pity for them, a charitable concern and sympathy ; and if a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not this charity in his heart, it is nothing, *1 Cor. xiii. 3.* We must draw out our souls to the hungry, *Isa.*

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lviii. 10. (2.) Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give according to their necessity and our ability, *James ii. 15. 16.* That which he has given. Margin, *His deed.* It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give ; and thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

2. The encouragement of charity. (1.) A very kind construction shall be put upon it : what is given to the poor, or done for them, God will place to account as lent to him, lent upon interest, so the word signifies ; he takes it kindly as if it were done to himself, and he would have us to take the comfort of it, and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. 2. A very rich recompence shall be made for it ; he will pay him again, in temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children, that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an evil temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity.

1. Do not say it is all in good time to correct them ; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them, check it presently, before it gets head and takes root, and is hardened into a habit. Chasten thy son while there is hope, for, perhaps, if he be let alone awhile, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it.

2. Do not say it is pity to correct them, and that because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it ; if the pain will be gained without correction, well and good ; but if you find, as it often proves, that your forgiving them once upon a dissembled repentance and promise of amendment, doth but embolden them to offend again, especially, if it be a thing that is in itself sinful, as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like, in such a case put on resolution, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. It is better he should cry under thy rod, than under the sword of the magistrate, or which is more fearful, that of divine vengeance.

19. A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment : for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

1. As we read this, it speaks, in short, that angry men never want woes ; those that are of strong, or rather headstrong passions, commonly bring themselves and their families into trouble by vexatious suits and quarrels, and the provocations they give ; they are still snarling in one instance or other for their unquarrelled heats ; and if their friends deliver them out of one trouble, they will presently involve themselves in another, and they must do it again. All which trouble to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions, and get the rule of their own spirit.

2. It may as well be read, *He that is of great wrath*, meaning the child that is to be corrected, and is impatient of rebuke, cries and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction deserves to be punished ; for if thou deliver him for the sake of that, thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more the next time. A stubborn, high-spirited child must be subdued betimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end.

Note. 1. It is well with those that are wise in their latter end, wise for their latter end, for their future state, wise for another world ; that are found wise when their latter end comes ; wife virgins, wife builders, wife stewards ; that are wise at length, and understand the things that be done to their peace, before they be hid from their eyes. A carnal worldling at his end shall be a fool, *Jer. xvii. 11.* but godliness will prove wisdom at last.

2. Those that would be wise in their latter end, must hear counsel and receive instruction in their beginnings, must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reprov'd when they are young. Those that would be stored in winter must gather in summer.

21. There are many devices in a man's heart : nevertheless the counsel of the LORD that shall stand.

Here is, 1. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God, he knows the many devices that are in men's hearts, devices against his counsel, as those, *Psal. li. 1, 2, 3.* *Micah iv. 11.* devices without his counsel, no regard had to his providence, as those, *James iv. 13.* This and the other they will do, and not take God along with them ; devices unlike God's counsels ; men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust, but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform.

2. God over-ruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination and interest leads them, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, whatever comes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks men's measures, and baffles their devices, but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, or disturb the proceedings of it, or cut him upon new counsels, *Isa. xiv. 24. xvi. 11.* What a check doth this give to politics, designing men, who think they can outwit all mankind ? there is a God in heaven that laughs at them ! *Psal. ii. 5.* What comfort doth this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which we are sure are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time !

22. The desire of a man is his kindness : and a poor man is better than a liar.

Note. 1. The honour of doing good is what we may laudably be ambitious of : It cannot but be the desire of a man, if he have any spark of virtue in him, to be kind : one would not covet an estate for any thing so much, as thereby to be put in a capacity of relieving the poor, and obliging our friends.

2. It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than have ability for it, and want a heart to it. The desire of a man, to be kind, and charitable, and generous, is his kindness, and shall be so construed ; both God and man will accept his good-will, according to what he has, and will not expect more. And a poor man that wisheth you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, is better than a liar, than a rich man, who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but when it comes to the setting to he will do nothing. The character of the

the men of low degree, that they are vanity, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree; that they are a lie, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.

23. The fear of the LORD *tendeth* to life, and *he that hath it shall abide satisfied*: he shall not be visited with evil.

See what they get by it, that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him.

1. Safety. They *shall not be visited with evil*; they may be visited with sickness, or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them from the love of God, or to hurt the soul.

2. Satisfaction. They *shall abide satisfied*; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them: It is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient, and soon gone. *Satur, pernoctabit*, i. e. *non cubabit incantatus*; he shall not go supperless to bed, he shall have that which will make him easy, and be an entertainment to him in silent and solitary hours, *Psal. xvi. 6, 7*.

3. True and complete happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to life, to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way to it: There is something in the nature of it fitting men for heaven, and so leading them to it.

24. A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool, for,

1. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture: *he hideth his hand in his bosom*, pretends he is lame and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom; when they are warm, there he must keep them so: He hugs himself in his own ease, and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it, for his part he thinks no such fine life as sitting still and doing nothing.

2. He will not bear the pains to feed himself; an elegant hyperbole; as we say, a man is so lazy that he would not shake fire off him; so here, he cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, no, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so that those that will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir: Thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore is egregious folly.

25. Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware; and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

Note, 1. The punishment of scorners will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness, that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that *they may hear and fear*, Deut. xix. 20. If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet *the simple will beware* of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection.

2. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves; they need not be smitten; a word to the wise is enough; do but *reprove one that has understanding*, and he will so far understand himself and his own interest, that he will *understand knowledge* by it, and not miss it again through ignorance and inadvertency, when once he has been told of it; so kindly doth he take reproof, and so wisely improve it.

26. He that wasteth his father, and chafeth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Here is, 1. The sin of a prodigal son. Besides the wrong he doth to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to them that were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him, which is a great aggravation of his sin, and renders it exceeding sinful in the eyes of God and man; *he wasteth his father*, wastes his estates which he should have to support him in his old age, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his grey head *with sorrow to the grave*. *He chafeth away his mother*, alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneasiness to her; he makes her weary of the house with his rudeness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and when he has spent all, turns her out of doors.

2. The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural; he makes himself odious to all mankind; it is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though, perhaps, without just cause, for teaching them no better, or being some way wanting to him.

27. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction, that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those who have had a good education, to take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretence of instructing them, draw them off from those good principles under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe,

1. There is that which seems designed for the instruction, but really tends to the destruction of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them a true thought and a fashionable conversation; how to palliate the sins they have a mind to, and stop the mouth of their own consciences; how to get clear of the restraints of their education, and to set up for wits and beans; This is the *instruction which causeth to err from the forms of sound words*, which should be held fast in faith and love.

2. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder doth to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. Dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind; and if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners.

28. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are full set to them to do evil.

1. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain from that sin. *An ungodly witness* is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or, *an ungodly witness* is one that profanely and atheistically witnesseth against religion and godliness, whose instructions seduce from the words of knowledge, ver. 27. Such a one *scorneth judgment*, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, *Job xv. 26*. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day: he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it.

2. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin. *The mouth of the wicked eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water*, *Job xv. 16*.

29. Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

Note, 1. Scorners are fools; those that ridicule things sacred and serious, do but make themselves ridiculous; *their folly shall be manifested unto all men*.

2. Those that *scorn judgments* cannot escape them, ver. 28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; they that *devour iniquity* swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate hath *judgments prepared for scorners*, for otherwise he would bear the sword in vain; but if he be remiss, and connive at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not, they are prepared, *Matt. xxv. 41*.

C H A P. XX.

1. WINE is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and who so is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is, 1. The mischief of drunkenness: *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging*; it is so to the sinner himself, it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promiseth him that satisfaction which it can never give him; it smiles upon him at first, but *at the last it bites*, in reflection upon it, it rages in his conscience; it is raging in the body, puts the humours into a ferment. *When the wine is in, the wit is out*, and then the man, according as is his natural temper, either mocks like a fool or rageth like a mad-man. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions, chap. xxiv. 29.

2. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred from thence. He that is *deceived thereby*, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, *he is not wise*, he shews that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that insatuates and befots men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is like to be.

2. The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: who so provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.

See here, 1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with them. Their fear with which (especially when they are absolute, and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, is as the roaring of a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and make them tremble, so that they cannot out-run him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love, rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. *Oderint dum metuant*.

2. How unwise therefore they are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and *so provoke them to anger*: They *sin against their own lives*; much more do they do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

3. It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify men's mistakes concerning strife.

1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels: whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an ace of either; that prescribes and imposes and gives law to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

2. Men think when they are engaged in quarrels it would be a shame to them to go back, and let fall the weapon; whereas really it is an honour for a man to cease from strife, and honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to shew the command he has of himself by *ceasing from strife*, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, *Gen. xiii. 8*.

4. The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold: therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness, and the love of ease.

1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is. *The sluggard* has ground to occupy, and has ability for it, he can plough, but he *will not*, some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is, it is cold weather; though ploughing-time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish, that in the way of their business cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing, and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty: but good soldiers must endure hardships.

2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports. They that *will not plough* at seed time, cannot expect to reap at harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment, when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of ploughing

ploughing, must submit to the shame of begging; they *shall beg in harvest, and yet have nothing*; no, not then when there is most plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may in justice not relieve them, they deserve to be left to starve. They that would not provide oil in their vessels, begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5. Counsel in the heart of man *is like deep water*: but a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him, for the pumping of other people and diving into them.

1. To get the knowledge of them. Though men's counsels and designs are never so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as *deep water*, which we cannot fathom; yet there are those that by fly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get it out of them, both what they have done, and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel, must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, have an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair, and hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently; but they are modest and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loth to come out; in such a case, *a man of understanding will draw it out*, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the converse of wise men, for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6. Most men will proclaim every one his own good-nefs: but a faithful man who can find?

Note, 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal: there is many a man that will call himself a man of mercy, will brag what good he has done, and what good he designs to do, or at least what an affection he hath to well-doing; most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it, and make a mighty matter of it.

2. But it is hard to find those that are really kind and liberal; that have done, and will do more than either they speak of, or care to hear spoken of; that will be a true friend in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7. The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

It is here observed to the honour of a good man,

1. That he doth well for himself; he has a certain rule, which with an even, steady hand, he governs himself by, he *walks in his integrity*, i. e. he keeps a good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for it is the rejoicing. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do, or reflecting on what he has done, which they are liable to that walk in deceit.

2. That he doth well for his family; *his children are blessed after him*, and fare the better for his sake; God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8. A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattereth all evil with his eyes.

Here is, 1. The character of a good governor. He is *a king* that deserves to be called so, who *sits in the throne*, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a *throne of judgment*, that he might do justice, right the injured, and punish the injurious; that makes his business his delight, and loves no pleasure comparable to it; that doth not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself, and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, 1 Kings x. 9.

2. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of a prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe, and refrained from doing an ill thing. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they not do, and what evil may they not prevent?

9. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

The question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! *Who can say, I am sinless?* Observe,

1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions; all, one as well as another; here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin: Adam in innocency, and saints in heaven can say so, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be, cannot; nay, those that are really good, will not, dare not say this.

2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, we *have made our hearts clean*, though we can say, through grace, we are cleaner than we have been, yet we cannot say that we are clean and pure from all remainders of sin; or though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say that our hearts are clean; or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say that we ourselves made our own hearts clean, it was the work of the Spirit; or though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say that we are *pure from our sin*, the sin that *easily besets us*, the *body of death*, which Paul complained of, Rom. vii. 24.

10. Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are an abomination to the LORD.

See here, 1. The various arts of deceiving that men have; all which evils the *love of money* is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had *divers weights*, an under weight for what they paid, and an over weight for what they received; in delivering out and taking in goods they had *divers measures*, a scanty measure to sell by, and a large measure to buy by. This was doing wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

2. The displeasure of God against them, whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer, or in the seller, they are all *alike an*

abomination to the Lord, he will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got; he hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be the avenger of all such.

11. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man *by his doings*; even a young tree by its first-fruits, *a child by his childish things*, whether his work be clean only, appearing good, (the word is used chap. xvi. 2.) or whether it be right, i. e. really good. This intimates,

1. That children will discover themselves; one may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent as grown people have.

2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage them and dispose of them accordingly. Drive the nail that will go, and draw out that which goes amiss. *Wisdom is herein profitable to direct*.

12. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

Note, 1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that *formed the eye*, and *planted the ear*, Psal. xciv. 9. and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes, and our ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them.

2. God is the God of grace; it is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, the eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, 1. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessities, which should have been gotten by honest labour. Therefore though thou must sleep, nature requires it, yet *Love not sleep*, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for farther work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise. We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it, and otherwise they shall have no good of them. They that love sleep are likely to come to poverty, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless, careless disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake.

2. Those that stir up themselves to their business, may expect to have conveniences. *Open thine eyes*, i. e. awake and shake off sleep, see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! and when thou art awake look up, look to thine hits, and do not let slip thine opportunities: apply thy mind close to thy business, and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage, *open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread*; if thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast.

14. It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here, 1. What arts men use to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind for the commodity, when, perhaps, they cannot go without it; there may be prudence in that, but they vilify and run down that which they know to be of value; they cry, *It is naught, it is naught*, it has this and the other fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is quite too dear; they can have better and cheaper elsewhere; or have bought better and cheaper elsewhere; this is the common way of dodging; and after all it may be it is neither so nor so, and they themselves know the contrary; but the buyer has no other way of being even with the seller, who doth as extravagantly commend his goods, and justify the price he sets on them; and so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well, if both the buyer and seller would be modest, and speak as they think.

2. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain, when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain; when he has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer, as many poor tradesmen are forced to do, small profit is better than none; then he goes away and boasts what goods he has got at his own price; and takes it as an affront and reflection upon his judgment if any one disparageth his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the goods better than the seller himself did, and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings, and proud of their tricks: whereas a fraud and a lie is what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained never so much by it.

15. There is gold, and multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

The *lips of knowledge*, i. e. a good understanding to guide the lips, and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge, are to be preferred far before gold, and pearls, and rubies; for,

1. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce and hard to be got. *There is gold* in many a man's pocket that has no grace in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold, 1 Kings x. 21. and *abundance of rubies*, every body wore them, they were to be bought in every town; but wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel, few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.

2. They are more enriching to us, and more adorning. They make us rich towards God, rich in good works, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Most people are fond of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels, but he that has the lips of knowledge despiseth these, because he knows and possesseth better things.

16. Take his garment, that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of, that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted without good security.

1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that intangle themselves in rash suretyship to oblige their idle companions; they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale.

2. Those that are in league with ill women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them, they will be beggars in a little time, never give them credit without a good pawn. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

17. Bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, 1. Sin may be pleasant in the commission; it is possible it may: *bread of deceit*; wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be *sweet to a man*, and the more sweet for its being ill gotten; such pleasure doth the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects, all the pleasures and profits of sin are *bread of deceit*, they are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit, and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. However for a time they are *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*, and the sinner blesteth himself in them.

But, 2. It will be bitter in the reflection. Afterwards the sinner's mouth shall be filled with gravel; when his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrows. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18. Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Note, 1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and in matters of moment with our friends too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe conduct of his eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation, is repented of at leisure. Take time and you will have done the sooner. *Deliberanturum est diu, quod statuerendum est semel.*

2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war; consider and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat, *Luke xiv. 31.* And when it is begun, how, and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for skill is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and therefore must be done with good advice, *Prov. xxv. 8.* The rule among the Romans was, *nec sequi bellum, nec fugere.*

19. He that goeth about as a tale-bearer, revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with.

1. Tale-bearers, though they be commonly flatterers, and by speaking fair insinuate themselves into mens acquaintance. Those are ill people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbours and relations; to sow jealousies in the minds of people of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another; and reveal secrets which they are intrusted with, or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of, or under pretence of guessing at mens thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. Be not familiar with such, do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure they will betray your secrets too, and tell tales of you.

2. Flatterers, for they are commonly tale-bears. If a man fawn upon you, compliment and commend you, suspect him to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard, he will pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else to your prejudice, therefore *meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.* Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy their own praise, that will put a confidence in a man, and trust him with a secret or business because he speaks them fair.

20. Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, 1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees; he began with despising his father and mother, flighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to them who were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him; and this in defiance of God and his law, which hath made this a capital crime, *Exod. xxi. 17. Matt. xv. 4.* and in violation of all the bonds of duty, natural affection, and gratitude.

2. An undutiful child becomes very miserable at last; *his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*; all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation; let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise in the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off, and his posterity be a curse to him; and it will be his eternal ruin, the lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness, so the word is, even that which is for ever, *Jude 13 Matt. xxii. 13.*

21. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning: but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, 1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. Those that will be rich, by right or wrong, that make no conscience of what they say or do if they can but get money by it, that, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father; and what they get they fordidly spare and hoard up, that grudge themselves and their families food convenient, and think all lost but what they buy land with, or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich in a little time, at his first setting out.

2. An estate that is suddenly raised is many times as suddenly ruined; it was raised hastily, but not being raised honestly, it proves *soon ripe and soon rotten*, the end thereof shall not be blessed of God; and if he do not bless

it, it can neither be comfortable nor of any continuance; so that he who got it at the end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firm.

22. Say not thou, I will recompence evil: but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

They that live in this world, must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us;

1. We must not revenge ourselves, no not so much as think of it or design it. *Say not thou*, no not in thy heart, *I will recompence evil* for evil, do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not with revenge, or hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh, and the resentments of it most deep. Never say *I will do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in*; and that thou canst not do in meditating revenge.

2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong, in such a way and manner as he thinks fit, and in his own due time. *Wait on the Lord*, attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he doth not say he shall punish him that has injured thee, instead of desiring that, thou shalt forgive him and pray for him, but *he shall save thee*, and that is enough; He will protect thee, so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay he will recompense good to thee to balance thy trouble, and encourage thy patience, as David hoped when Shimei cursed him, *2 Sam. xvi. 12.*

23. Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD: and a false balance is not good.

This is to the same purpose with what was said, *ver. 10.*

1. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates; as lying (which is of the same nature with this sin) is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates. *Prov. vi. 17-19.* And because probably it was a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of, as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that being commonly used there was no trading without it.

2. It is here added, *a false balance is not good*, to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself, there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain, for a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24. Man's goings are of the LORD. how can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught that in all our affairs,

1. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God; all our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us that is the will of God it should be. Our enterprises succeed not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man, so the word signifies, *are of the Lord*, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.

2. We have foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them. *How can a man understand his own ways?* How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret; and therefore how can he of himself contrive what to do without divine direction: We so little understand our own way, that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the conduct and submit to the disposal of providence.

25. It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy: and after vows to make inquiry.

Two things by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and rum at length.

1. Sacrilege; mens alienating holy things, and converting them to their own use, which is here called devouring them. What is devoted any way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship, or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly imbezzle them, or defeat the purpose for which they were given, will have a great deal to answer for; *Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings!* *Mal. iii. 8.* Those that hurry over religious offices, their praying and preaching, and huddle them up in haste as being impatient to get done, may be said to *devour that which is holy.*

2. Covenant-breaking. It is a snare to a man after he has made vows to God to inquire how he may evade them, or get them dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions ambiguous, that was his fault, he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender) in great perplexities; if he be to inquire concerning them afterwards, see *Ecclef. v. 6.* for when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, *Acts v. 4.*

26. A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, 1. What is the business of magistrates; they are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must scatter the wicked, that are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this, but by bringing the wheel over them, i. e. putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power, and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching.

2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to this; they have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, that is both religious and discreet, that it is likely to affect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27. The spirit of a man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man.

1. It is a divine light. It is the *candla of the Lord*; a candle of his lighting, for it is the *inspiration of the Almighty* that gives us understanding. He *formeth the spirit of man within him*. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle that is not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the Father of lights.

2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness; 1 Cor. ii. 11. it searcheth into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praiseth what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judgeth of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed, and keep void of offence.

28. Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

Here is, 1. The virtues of a good king. Those are *mercy and truth*, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. *Mercy and truth* are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called gods.

2. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person, and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people, and feared by his enemies, if it be possible he should have any.

29. The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

This shews that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise or envy the other.

1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business, and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The *glory of young men is their strength*, provided they use it well in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts; and that they be not proud of it, nor trust to it.

2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave and fit for counsel, and though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. *Juniors ad labores, seniores ad honores*. God has put honour upon the old man; for his *grey head* is his beauty. See Dan. vii. 9.

30. The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Note, 1. Many need *severe rebukes*. Some children are so obstinate, that their parents can do no good with them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigour of the law, and public justice; gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions.

2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as *corrosives* contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanseth away the evil there.

3. Oftentimes those that most need severe rebukes can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature, that men are as loth to be rebuked sharply for their sins, as to be beaten till their bones ache. *Correction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way*, and yet it is good for him, Heb. xii. 11.

C H A P. XXI.

1. **T**HE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Note, 1. Even the hearts of men are in God's hand, and not only their goings, as he had said, chap. xx. 24. God can change men's minds, can, by a powerful, insensible operation upon their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman by canals and gutters turns the waters through his grounds as he pleases; which doth not alter the nature of the water, or put any force upon it, no more than God's providence doth upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purpose.

2. Even king's hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The *hearts of kings are unsearchable* to us, much more unmanageable by us, as they have their *arcana imperii*, so they have the prerogatives of their crown, but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government: He *puts things into their hearts*, Rev. xvii. 17. Ezra vii. 27.

2. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there were nothing amiss in it; *Every way of a man*, even his *by way*, is *right in his own eyes*; the proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter; and in making that appear *right* to itself, which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience.

2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment is concerning ourselves, *the Lord pondereth the heart*: God looks at the heart, and judgeth of men according to that, of their actions, according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so: He weighs it in an unerring balance, chap. xvi. 2.

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3. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Here, 1. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit, that if they offer sacrifice, that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way *seem right*, ver. 2. *We have fasted*, Isa. lviii. 3. *I have peace of serings with me*, Prov. vii. 14.

2. It is plainly declared, that living a good life, doing justice, and loving mercy is more pleasing to God, than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion; sacrifices were of divine institution, and were then acceptable to God, if they were offered in faith, and with repentance, otherwise not, Isa. i. 11. &c. but then moral duties were preferred before them, 1 Sam. xv. 22. which intimates that their excellency was not innate, nor the obligation to them perpetual, Micah vi. 6, 7, 8. Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour, and this is more pleasing to God, than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, Mark xii. 33.

4. An high look, and a proud heart and the ploughing of the wicked is sin.

This may be taken as shewing us,

1. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a *high look*, and a *proud heart*, that carries himself insolently and scornfully both towards God and man, and that is always ploughing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, he is indeed a wicked man. *The light of the wicked is sin*. Sin is the *pride, the ambition, the glory, and joy, and the business of wicked men*.

2. The miseries of a wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs and most elaborate contrivances and projects are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them, and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business and employment of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin. So Bishop Patrick. They do all to *serve their lusts*, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore *their ploughing is sin*, and, no marvel, when their sacrificing is so, Prov. xv. 8.

5. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness: but of every one that is hasty, only to want.

Here is, 1. The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not stick at the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which we say, goes far in a day. And with diligence there must be contrivance; the thoughts of the diligent are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seek thou a man thus prudent and diligent, and he will have enough to live on.

2. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices, or unwise projects, they are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shews the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no conscience of a lie when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but,

1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect; it is a *vanity tossed to and fro*; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be *tossed to and fro* by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with the destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices, they are really seeking death, they lay themselves open to the envy and ill will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God, by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves, and sink them to hell.

7. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, 1. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (ver. 6.) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you had as good pick a man's pocket, as impose upon him by a lie, in making a bargain which he had no fence against but by not believing you, and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men.

2. The cause of injustice. Men *refuse to do judgment*, they will not render to all their due; but withhold it, and omissions make way for commissions, they come at length to robbery itself. They that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong.

3. The effect of injustice. It will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will *terrify them*, so some, their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement; will cut them, will *saw them asunder*, so others, it will *destroy them* here and for ever, therefore he had said (ver. 6.) they *seek death*.

8. The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.

This shews that as men are, so is their way.

1. All men have ill ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange; and this is the way of the most of men, such is the general corruption of mankind. *They are all gone aside*, Psal. xiv. 2, 3. all flesh has perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he doth, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty; it is strange, for you know not where to find him or when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good and

and estrangeth men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure, their work shews them to be so, for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God, and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostacy is froward and strange, but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state of which there is here and there one, *their work is right*, as Noah's was in the old world, *Gen. vii. 1.*

9. *It is better to dwell in the corner of the house top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*

See here, 1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling, scolding woman to his wife; that upon every occasion, and if so, many times upon no occasion, breaks out into passion, and chides either him or those about her; is fretful to herself and furious to her children and servants, and in both vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him; a *house of society*, so the word is, in which a man may be sociable and entertain his friends; this will make both him and his house unsociable, and unfit for the enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs company.

2. What many a man is forced to do under such an affliction. He cannot keep up his authority; he finds it to no purpose to contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly, and rages so much the more; and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire *into a corner of the house-top*, and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour, and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do so, than quit the house and go into bad company for diversion, as many, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

10. *The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.*

See here the character of a very wicked man.

1. The strong inclination he hath to do mischief. His very *soul desireth evil*, desires that evil may be done, and that he may have the pleasure not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it; the root of wickedness lies in the soul, the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives, and brings forth sin.

2. The strong aversion he has to do good. *His neighbour*, his friend, his nearest relation *finds no favour in his eyes*, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

11. *When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*

This we had before, *chap. xix. 25.* and it shews, there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise.

1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern more than he did the evil of sin, and will take warning by it, and take heed.

2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught. *When the wise is instructed* by the preaching of the word, *he, i. e. not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by, receiveth knowledge.* It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to ourselves, which was designed for another.

12. *The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.*

1. As we read this verse, it shews the reason why good men, when they come to understand things right will not envy the prosperity of evil doers. When they see *the house of the wicked*, how full it is, perhaps of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they *wisely consider it*, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, they see *God overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness*, that there is a curse upon their habitation, which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envy them.

2. Some give another sense of it: *The righteous man*, i. e. the judge or magistrate, that is intrusted with the execution of justice, and the conservation of the public peace, *examines the house of the wicked*, searcheth it for arms or for stolen goods, makes a diligent enquiry concerning his family, and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power *overthrow the wicked for his wickedness*, and prevent their doing any further mischief; that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured, or the unclean birds.

13. *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

Here is the description and doom of an uncharitable man.

1. His description. He *stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor*, at the cry of their wants and miseries, he resolves to take no cognizance of them; at the cry of their requests and supplications, he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him, or if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not heed them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by the importunities; he *shuts up the bowels of his compassion*, and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, *Abs. vii. 57.*

2. His doom. He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him cry, and then *he shall not be heard*. Men will not hear him but reward him as he has rewarded others: God will not hear him; for he that *sheweth no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy*, *Jam. ii. 13.* and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread, in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to their prayers that are deaf to the poor's cries, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, *Exod. xxii. 23.*

14. *A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*

Here is, 1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts: Nothing more violent than *anger*; O the force of *strong wrath*! and yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and discharge the keenest and most passionate resentment: Covetousness is commonly a master-sin, and has the command of other lusts. *Pecunia obediunt omnia.* Thus Jacob pacified Esau, and Abigail David.

2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes: it must be *a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom*; for he that takes it, would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended at; but if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor brag of the presents he sends; but if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous, that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15. *It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*

Note, 1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men, both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place, and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is: They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure, not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.

2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness; it is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit, or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is: there is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16. *The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead.*

Here is, 1. The sinner upon his ramble; he *wanders out of the way of understanding*, and when he has once left that good way, he wanders endlessly. The way of religion is *the way of understanding*; they that are not truly pious, are not truly intelligent; those that *wander out of this way*, break the hedge which God hath set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

2. The sinner at his rest, or rather his ruin: He *shall remain (quiescet, but not in pace) in the congregation of the giants*; the sinners of the old world that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or *in the congregation of the damned*, that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that they shall remain, remain for ever, that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17. *He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.*

Here is an argument against a voluptuous, luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings men's temporal interests to. Here is,

1. The description of an epicure. *He loves pleasure.* God allows us the use of the delights of sense soberly and temperately, of *wine to make glad the heart*, and put vigour into the spirits; and *oil to make the face to shine*, and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurablehness, is impatient of every thing that crosseth him in his pleasures, relishes those as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste to spiritual delights, here is an epicure, *2 Tim. iii. 4.*

2. The punishment of an epicure in this world. *He shall be a poor man*; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at a great expence; and there are instances of those who want necessities, and live upon alms, that, when time was, could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

18. *The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous; and the transgressor for the upright.*

This intimates,

1. What should be done by the justice of men; *the wicked*, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments, which otherwise will be inflicted, and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus when Achan was stoned, he was *a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel*; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were *a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David*.

2. What is often done by the providence of God; *the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead*, and so seems as if he were *a ransom for him*, *chap. xi. 8.* God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off, than abandon his own people. *I will give men for thee*, *Isa. xliii. 3, 4.*

19. *It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*

Note 1. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness, that cannot dwell in peace and love: Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit have no joy of their union.

2. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet if she be peevish and provoking, *it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness*, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness, than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours. See ver. 9.

20. *There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wife: but a foolish man spendeth it up.*

Note, 1. Those that are wise will increase what they have, and live plentifully, their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expences to their income, and to lay up for hereafter, so that *there is a treasure of things*

things to be desired, and as much as need be desired, a good flock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of oil, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, *Deut. vii. 8.* this is in the habitation or cottage of the wife; and it is better to have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a modish one, and keep a forry house in it. God blesteth the endeavours of the wife, and then their houses are replenished.

2. Those that are foolish, will mispend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they had to nothing. Those manage themselves ill that are in haste to spend what they have, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend what their wise parents had laid up; one sinner destroys much good, as the prodigal son.

21. He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

See here, 1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to follow after righteousness and mercy: not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains; as those that are pressing forwards, and in fear of coming short; we must both do justly, and love mercy, and proceed and persevere therein; and though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it, and follow after it.

2. What will be the advantage of doing so: Those that do follow after righteousness, they shall find righteousness, i. e. God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of it; they that make conscience of being just to others, shall be justly dealt with by others, and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it because they sought amiss, *Rom. ix. 31.* Otherwise, Seek and you shall find; and with it, shall find both life and honour, everlasting life and honour, the crown of righteousness.

22. A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note, 1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. The city of the mighty thinks itself impregnable, and therefore its strength is the confidence thereof, what it boasts of, and trusts in, in bidding defiance to danger.

2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, yet many times perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far, even against great force; and a stratagem well managed may effectually scale the city of the mighty, and cast down the strength it had such a confidence in. A wise man will gain upon the affections of people, and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that by strength of arms. They that understand their interest, will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23. Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note, 1. It is our great concern to keep our soul from straits, from being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves; and our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

2. Those that would keep their souls, must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must keep the mouth by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must keep the tongue also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words, we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24. Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who deal-eth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness.

1. It exposeth men to sin, it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of proud wrath; they are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions, and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men, is proud wrath. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat presently. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them, and imperious towards all about them; only by pride comes all this.

2. It exposeth men to shame; they get into an ill name by it, and every one calls them proud and haughty scorners, and therefore no body cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little, and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25. The desire of the slothful killeth him: for his hands refuse to labour. 26. He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Here is, 1. The miseries of the slothful, whose hands refuse to labour in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood; they are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself, to which they might lay their hands, and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves; (see *Prov. xxii. 16.*) Soul, take thine ease; but really they are enemies to themselves; for, besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them; though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour; their desires are impetuous and insatiable, they covet greedily all the day long, and cry, Give, give; they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else; now these desires kill them, they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to death, and, perhaps, put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts, as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains

to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those desires kill them, will aggravate their condemnation, and be witnesses against them that they were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but they refused to be at the pains that was necessary to the obtaining of them.

2. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the farther satisfaction of doing good to others; the slothful are always craving, and gaping to receive, but the righteous are always full, and contriving to give; and it is more blessed to give than to receive. They give, and spare not; give liberally, and upbraid not: they give a portion to seven, and also to eight, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

27. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Sacrifices were of divine institution, and when they were offered in faith, and with repentance, and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them, and well pleased in them; but they were often not only unacceptable, but an abomination to God and he declared so; which was an indication, both that they were not required for their own sakes, and that there were better things and more effectual in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an abomination.

1. When they were brought by wicked men that did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering: Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship; they could freely give God their breasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts: The Pharisees gave alms: But when the person is an abomination, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; even when he brings it diligently: so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God, *Psal. i. 8.* yet they are an abomination to him.

2. Much more when they were brought with wicked minds, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to their wickedness; as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees long prayers. When men make a shew of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design; when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended; then especially the performance is an abomination, *Isa. lxvi. 5.*

28. A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth, speaketh constantly.

Here is, 1. The doom of a false witness: He that, for favour to one side, or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or at least doth not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined; a man may tell a lie, perhaps, in his haste; but he that gives in a false testimony doth it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of such man's credit; but though it should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined: the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2. The praise of him that is conscientious: He that heareth, i. e. obeyeth the command of God, which is to speak every man truth with his neighbour; that testifies nothing but what he hath heard and knows to be true; he speaks constantly, i. e. consistently with himself; he is always in the same story; he speaks in finem: people will give credit to him, and hear him out; he speaks unto victory, he carries the cause, which the false witness shall lose: He shall speak to eternity; what is true, is true eternally. The lip of truth is established for ever.

29. A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.

Here is, 1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He hardeneth his face, brazens it, that he may not blush; feels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law, and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of providence; he will have his way, and nothing shall hinder him, *Isa. lvii. 17.*

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man: as for the upright, he doth not ask, what would I do, what have I a mind to? and that I will have; but what should I do? what doth God require of me? what is duty? what is prudence? what is for edification? and so he doth not force his way, but directs his way by a safe and certain rule.

30. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the LORD. 31. The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

The designing, busy part of mankind, are here directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe,

1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, the best politics and politicians on their side, yet if it be against the Lord, it cannot prosper long, it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his Anointed, and will carry his point in despite of them, *Psal. ii. 1-6.* They that fight against God, are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever make war with the Lamb, he will certainly overcome them, *Rev. xvii. 14.*

2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause never so good, and the patrons of it never so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, never so probable, still they must acknowledge God, and take him along with them. Means indeed are to be used, the horse must be prepared against the day of battle, and the foot too, they must be armed and disciplined; in Solomon's time even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them; but, after all, safety and salvation is of the Lord; he can save without armies, but armies cannot without him; and therefore he must be sought to, and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained, he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for the day of battle, our great concern must be to make God our friend, and secure his favour.

C H A P. XXII.

1. **A** Good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Here are two things which are more valuable, and which we should covet more than great riches,

1. To be well spoken of. *A name*, that is, *a good name*, a name for good things with God and good people, this is *rather to be chosen than great riches*; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have great riches; but a good name makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them.

2. To be well beloved; to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better than silver and gold: Christ had neither silver nor gold, but he grew in favour with God and man, Luke ii. 52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to think on those things that are lovely, and of good report, Phil. iv. 8.

2. The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

Note, 1. Among the children of men, divine providence hath so ordered it, that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed with societies; the Lord is the maker of them both, i. e. both the author of their beings, and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest are; and the poorest have the honour to be the work of God's hand as much as the greatest: *Have they not all one Father?* Mal. ii. 10. Job xxxi. 15. God makes some rich, that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor that they may be serviceable to the rich; and they have need one of another, 1 Cor. xii. 21. He makes some poor to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God; and others rich to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even the poor we have always with us, they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither.

2. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between rich and poor, yet in most things they meet together, especially before the Lord who is the maker of them all, and regardeth not the rich more than the poor Job xxxiv. 19. Rich and poor meet together at the bar of God's justice: all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor; and at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich: There is the same Christ, the same Scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises for them both: There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich; Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham: and the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor; all stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave. The small and great are there.

3. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished.

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2. The mischief of rashness and inconsideration: the simple, that believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they pass on and are punished, venture upon sin though they are told what will be in the end thereof; throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late. See an instance of both these, Exod. ix. 20, 21. Nothing is so fatal to precious souls as this, they will not take warnings.

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2. The blessedness of such a man, the souls of the poor will bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself shall bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

10. Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the scorner doth; it is implied, that he sows discord and makes mischief wherever he comes; much of the strife and contention which disturbs the peace of all societies is owing to the evil interpreter, as some read it, that construes every thing to the worst; to those that we despise and deride every one that comes in their way, and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

2. What is to be done with the scorner, that will not be reclaimed; cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrown out of Abraham's family. They that would secure the peace must exclude the scorner.

11. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips, the king shall be his friend.

Here is, 1. The qualification of an accomplished, a complete gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business; he must be an honest man, a man that loves pureness of heart, and hates all impurity; not only pure from fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs; that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair, from a principle, and delights in nothing more than keeping his own conscience clean, and void of offence. He must also be able to speak handsomely, and with a good grace; not to daub and flatter, but to deliver himself decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit.

2. The preferment such a man stands fair for; the king, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, shall be his friend, shall make him of his cabinet council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's that was called the king's friend; or, in any business he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings; a man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah the prince will be his friend: this honour have all the saints.

12. The

12. The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1. The special care God takes to *preserve knowledge*, i. e. to keep up religion in the world, by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself, and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind; and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds, and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of *the eyes of the Lord*, i. e. his watchful providence. Or, he preserveth *men of knowledge*, wise and good men, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. particularly faithful witnesses, that speak what they know, God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He doth by his grace *preserve knowledge* in such, doth secure his own work and interest in them. See Prov. ii. 7, 8.

2. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge, and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world: *He overthroweth the words of the transgressor*, and *preserveth knowledge* in spite of them: He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13. The slothful man saith, *There is a lion without*, I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, 1. Those that have no mind to their business will never want excuses to shift it off. Multitudes are ruined both for soul and body by their slothfulness, and yet still they had something or other to say for themselves; so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls! And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

2. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties. *The slothful man* has work to do *without* in the fields, but he fancies *there is a lion* there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear some body or other should meet him and kill him: He doth not himself think so, only he *saith* so to those that call him up; he talks of *a lion without*, but considers not the real danger from the devil, that *roaring lion*, that is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness which kills him.

14. The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness; as they tender the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of *strange women*, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to; of *the mouth of strange women*, of the kisses of their lips, Prov. vii. 13. of the words of their lips, their charms, and enticements; dread them, have nothing to do with them; for,

1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin, it is a sign they are abandoned of God; it is *a deep pit*, which those *fall* into that are *abhorred of the Lord*, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women, when it speaks thee under the wrath of God.

2. It is held in that they recover themselves, for it is *a deep pit*, it will be hard getting out of it, it doth so beset the mind, and debauch the conscience by pleasing the flesh.

15. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:

1. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is *foolishness*, it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest; it is *in the heart*, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is *in the heart of children*; they bring it into the world with them; it is what they were shapen and conceived in; it is not only found there, but it is *bound* there; it is annexed to the heart; so some vicious dispositions cleave close to the soul, are bound to it, as the imp to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property; there is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot; they two become one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begot in our own likeness. O God, thou knowest this foolishness.

2. That *correction* is necessary to the cure of it: It will not be got out by fair means and gentle methods, there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father, Heb. xii. 6, 7. and under the correction we must strike down folly, and kiss the rod.

16. He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

This shews what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which in the end they will impoverish themselves, and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they *oppress the poor*, and *give to the rich*; i. e.

1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that, by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expence, they may *increase their riches*; but they will make presents *to the rich*, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vain glory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage; such *shall surely come to want*: many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, Luke xiv. 12, 13.

2. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they *oppress* them, rob the spital, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade their rights who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then *give bribes to the rich* to protect and countenance them in it, but in vain, they *shall come to want*. They that rob God, and so make him their enemy, cannot secure themselves by *giving to the rich*, to make them their friends.

17. Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known

to thee this day, even to thee. 20. Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge? 21. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changeth his stile and manner of speaking; hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of chap. x. he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of chap. xxiv. he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, to his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person: hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it is drawn out further. See how wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one: To awaken attention, and to allist our application, we are addressed to. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them; nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should apply themselves to particular persons, as here; Do thou do so and so. Here is,

1. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to *the words of the wise men*, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests; and particularly to that *knowledge* which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments: To these *words*, to this *knowledge*, the ear must be *bowed down*, in humility and serious attention; and the *heart applied* by faith and love and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

2. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

(1.) The worth and weight of the things themselves, which Solomon in this book gives us the *knowledge* of; they are not trivial things for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be acted in sport and to pass away time; no; they are *excellent things*, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind, and all communities; they are *princely things*, so the word is; fit for kings to speak and senates to hear. They are things that concern *counsels and knowledge*, i. e. wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

(2.) The clearness of the discovery of these things and the directing of them to us in particular. They are *made known*, publicly known, that all may read; plainly known, that he that runs may read; *made known this day*, more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge: *made known in this thy day*; but it is only a little while that this light is with you; perhaps the things that are *this day made known to thee*, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may before to-morrow be *hid from thine eyes*. They are *written* for the greater certainty, that they may be received, and the more safely be transmitted pure and entire to posterity; but that which the emphasis is here most laid upon is, that they are *made known to thee, even to thee*, and *written to thee* as if it were a letter directed to thee by name; it is suited to thee and to thy case, thou mayest in this glass see thine own face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged; we cannot say of these things, they are good things, but they are nothing to us; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

(3.) The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. 1. If we hide them in our hearts they will be very pleasing, and yield us an abundant satisfaction, ver. 18. *It is a pleasant thing*, and will be thy constant entertainment, *if thou keep them within thee*; if thou digest them, and be acted and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould. The form of godliness, when that is refled in, is but a force put upon a man, and he doth but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, Prov. ii. 10. 2. If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation; *they shall be fitted in thy lips*; speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak considering thy character: Thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things, as well as in thinking of them.

(4.) The advantage designed us by them. The *excellent things* which God hath *written* to us, are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are *written* to us.

1. That we may have a confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with him: *That thy trust may be in the Lord*, ver. 19. We cannot trust in God but in the way of duty, we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God, and dependence on him.

2. That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment: *That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth*: That thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. Note, 1. It is a desirable thing to know, not only *the words of truth*, but *the certainty* of them; that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. 2. The way to *know the certainty of the words of truth*, is to make conscience our duty; for *if any man do his will, he shall know* for certainty that the doctrine is of God, John vii. 17.

3. That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction: *That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to them that send thee* to consult thee as an oracle; or, as the margin reads it, *to those that send thee*, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business. Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments, will be best able to *give a reason of the hope that is in them*.

22. Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate. 23. For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprising; no; here is a plain and common, but very needful caution, against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe,

C H A P. XXII.

1. **A** Good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Here are two things which are more valuable, and which we should covet more than great riches,

1. To be well spoken of. *A name*, that is, *a good name*, a name for good things with God and good people, this is *rather to be chosen than great riches*; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have great riches; but a good name makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them.

2. To be well beloved; to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better than silver and gold: Christ had neither silver nor gold, but he grew in favour with God and man, Luke ii. 52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to think on those things that are lovely, and of good report, Phil. iv. 8.

2. The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

Note, 1. Among the children of men, divine providence hath so ordered it, that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed with societies; the Lord is the maker of them both, i. e. both the author of their beings, and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest are; and the poorest have the honour to be the work of God's hand as much as the greatest: *Have they not all one Father?* Mal. ii. 10. Job xxxi. 15. God makes some rich, that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor that they may be serviceable to the rich; and they have need one of another, 1 Cor. xii. 21. He makes some poor to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God; and others rich to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even the poor we have always with us, they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither.

2. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between rich and poor, yet in most things they meet together, especially before the Lord who is the maker of them all, and regardeth not the rich more than the poor Job xxxiv. 19. Rich and poor meet together at the bar of God's justice; all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor; and at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich: There is the same Christ, the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises for them both: There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich; Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham: and the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor; all stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave. The small and great are there.

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9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, 1. The description of a charitable man: he has a bountiful eye opposed to the evil eye, chap. xxiii. 6. and the same with the single eye Matt. 6. 22. An eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves; an eye, that upon the sight of one in want and misery affects the heart with compassion; an eye, that with the alms gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand, he gives of his bread to those that need; his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating: He will rather abridge himself, than see the poor perish for want; yet doth not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

2. The blessedness of such a man, the joys of the poor will bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself shall bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

10. Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the scorner doth; it is implied, that he sows discord and makes mischief wherever he comes; much of the strife and contention which disturbs the peace of all societies is owing to the evil interpreter, as some read it, that construes every thing to the worst; to those that we despise and deride every one that comes in their way, and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

2. What is to be done with the scorner, that will not be reclaimed; cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrown out of Abraham's family. They that would secure the peace must exclude the scorner.

11. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips, the king shall be his friend.

Here is, 1. The qualification of an accomplished, a complete gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business; he must be an honest man, a man that loves pureness of heart, and hates all impurity; not only pure from fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs; that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair, from a principle, and delights in nothing more than keeping his own conscience clean, and void of offence. He must also be able to speak handsomely, and with a good grace; not to flatter and flatter, but to deliver himself decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit.

2. The preferment such a man stands fair for; the king, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, shall be his friend, shall make him of his cabinet council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's that was called the king's friend; or, in any business he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings; a man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah the prince will be his friend: this honour have all the saints.

12. The

12. The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1. The special care God takes to *preserve knowledge*, i. e. to keep up religion in the world, by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself, and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind; and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds, and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of the eyes of the Lord, i. e. his watchful providence. Or, he preserveth men of knowledge, wise and good men, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. particularly faithful witnesses, that speak what they know, God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He doth by his grace *preserve knowledge* in such, doth secure his own work and interest in them. See Prov. ii. 7, 8.

2. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge, and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world: *He overthroweth the words of the transgressor, and preserveth knowledge* in spite of them: He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13. The slothful man saith, *There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.*

Note, 1. Those that have no mind to their business will never want excuses to shift it off. Multitudes are ruined both for soul and body by their slothfulness, and yet still they had something or other to say for themselves; so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls! And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

2. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties. The slothful man has work to do without in the fields, but he fancies there is a lion there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear some body or other should meet him and kill him: He doth not himself think so, only he saith so to those that call him up; he talks of a lion without, but considers not the real danger from the devil, that running lion, that is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness which kills him.

14. The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness; as they tender the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of *strange women*, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to; of the mouth of *strange women*, of the kisses of their lips, Prov. vii. 13. of the words of their lips, their charms, and enticements; dread them, have nothing to do with them; for,

1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin, it is a sign they are abandoned of God; it is a deep pit, which those fall into that are abhorred of the Lord, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women, when it speaks thee under the wrath of God.

2. It is said that they recover themselves, for it is a deep pit, it will be hard getting out of it, it doth beset the mind, and debauch the conscience by pleasing the flesh.

15. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:

1. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is *foolishness*, it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest; it is in the heart, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is in the heart of children: they bring it into the world with them; it is what they were shapen and conceived in; it is not only found there, but it is bound there; it is annexed to the heart; so some vicious dispositions cleave close to the soul, are bound to it, as the imp to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property; there is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot; they two become one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begot in our own likeness. O God, thou knowest this foolishness.

2. That correction is necessary to the cure of it: It will not be got out by fair means and gentle methods, there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father, Heb. xii. 6, 7. and under the correction we must strike down folly, and kiss the rod.

16. He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

This shews what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which in the end they will impoverish themselves, and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they oppress the poor, and give to the rich; i. e.

1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that, by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expence, they may increase their riches; but they will make presents to the rich, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vain glory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage; such shall surely come to want: many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, Luke xiv. 12, 13.

2. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they oppress them, rob the spital, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade their rights who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then give bribes to the rich to protect and countenance them in it, but in vain, they shall come to want. They that rob God, and so make him their enemy, cannot secure themselves by giving to the rich, to make them their friends.

17. Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wife, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known

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to thee this day, even to thee. 20. Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge? 21. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changeth his stile and manner of speaking; hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of chap. x. he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of chap. xxiv. he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, to his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person: hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it is drawn out further. See how wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one: To awaken attention, and to assist our application, we are addressed to. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them; nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should apply themselves to particular persons, as here; Do thou do so and so. Here is,

1. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to the words of the wise men, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests; and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments: To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down, in humility and serious attention; and the heart applied by faith and love and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

2. A guments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

(1.) The worth and weight of the things themselves, which Solomon in this book gives us the knowledge of; they are not trivial things for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be acted in sport and to pass away time; no; they are excellent things, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind, and all communities; they are princely things, so the word is; fit for kings to speak and senators to hear. They are things that concern counsels and knowledge, i. e. wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

(2.) The clearness of the discovery of these things and the directing of them to us in particular. They are made known, publicly known, that all may read; plainly known, that he that runs may read; made known this day, more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge: made known in this thy day; but it is only a little while that this light is with you; perhaps the things that are this day made known to thee, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may before to-morrow be hid from thine eyes. They are written for the greater certainty, that they may be received, and the more safely be transmitted pure and entire to posterity; but that which the emphasis is here most laid upon is, that they are made known to thee, even to thee, and written to thee as if it were a letter directed to thee by name; it is suited to thee and to thy case, thou mayest in this glass see thine own face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged; we cannot say of these things, they are good things, but they are nothing to us; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

(3.) The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. 1. If we hide them in our hearts they will be very pleasing, and yield us an abundant satisfaction, ver. 18. It is a pleasant thing, and will be thy constant entertainment, if thou keep them within thee; if thou digest them, and be acted and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould. The form of godliness, when that is rested in, is but a force put upon a man, and he doth but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, Prov. ii. 10. 2. If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation; they shall be fitted in thy lips; speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak considering thy character: Thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things, as well as in thinking of them.

(4.) The advantage designed us by them. The excellent things which God hath written to us, are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are written to us.

1. That we may have a confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with him: That thy trust may be in the Lord, ver. 19. We cannot trust in God but in the way of duty, we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God, and dependence on him.

2. That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment: That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth: That thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. Note, 1. It is a desirable thing to know, not only the words of truth, but the certainty of them; that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. 2. The way to know the certainty of the words of truth, is to make conscience our duty; for if any man do his will, he shall know for certainty that the doctrine is of God, John vii. 17.

3. That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction: That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to them that send thee, to consult thee as an oracle; or, as the margin reads it, to those that send thee, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business. Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments, will be best able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

22. Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate. 23. For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprising; no; here is a plain and common, but very needful caution, against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe,

1. The sin itself, and that is *robbing the poor*, and making them poorer; taking from those that have but little to lose, and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to *rob the poor*, whom we should relieve; to squeeze those with our power, whom we should water with our bounty; to *oppress the afflicted*, and so to add affliction to them; to give judgment against them, and so to patronize those that rob them; which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged, poor men cannot help it, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

2. The aggravations of the sin. (1.) If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, embolden us to rob them, it is so much the worse; that is *robbing the poor, because he is poor*: This is not only a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless; but it is unnatural, and speaks men worse than beasts. (2.) Or if it be done under colour of law and justice, that is *oppressing the afflicted in the gate*, where they ought to be protected from wrong, and to have justice done against those that oppress them.

3. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresseth the poor, is at his peril; for, (1.) The oppressed will not find God their powerful patron, he will *plead their cause*, and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will. (2.) The oppressors will find him a just avenger; he will make reprisals upon them, will *spoil the souls of them that spoil them*; he will repay them in spiritual judgments, in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

24. Make no friendship with an angry man: and with a furious man thou shalt not go. 25. Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Here is, 1. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate ourselves to our friends, and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under that sacred tie to any one whom it would be our folly to accommodate ourselves to; though we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful whom we lay in our bosoms, and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man that is easily provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, that when he is in a passion, cares not what he saith or doth, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend or companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us, and that will be our trouble, and will expect that we should, like him, be angry with others, and that will be our sin.

2. Good cause given for this caution, *lest thou learn his ways*. Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them, that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion: we shall thereby *get a snare to our souls*; a disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and an occasion of much sin. He doth not say, lest thou have ill language given thee, or get a broken head, but which is much worse, lest thou imitate him, or humour him, so contract an ill habit.

26. Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. 27. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust.

1. We must not associate ourselves, nor contract an intimacy with men of broken fortunes and reputation, that need and will urge their friends to be bound for them that they may cheat their neighbours to feed their lusts, and by keeping up a little longer, may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Have nothing to do with such, be not thou among them.

2. We must not cheat people of their money, by *striking hands* ourselves, or *becoming surety for others*, when we have not to pay. If a man by the divine providence is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped, but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows he has not wherewithal to pay, or that which he has is so settled, that the creditor cannot come at it, he doth in effect pick his neighbours pocket, and though in all cases compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course, and his *bed be taken from under him*, which might not be taken for a pawn to secure a debt, *Ecc. xxii. 26, 27*. For if a man appeared to be so poor that he had nothing else to give for security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it: But for the recovery of a debt, it seems it might be taken by the *finium jus*.

3. We must not ruin our own estates and families: every man ought to be just to himself, and to his wife and children: those are not so who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by incumbering themselves with others debts, waste what they have, and bring themselves to poverty. We may *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods*, if it be for the testimony of a good conscience, but if it be for our own rashness and folly we cannot but take it heavily.

21. Remove not the ancient land-mark which thy fathers have set.

1. We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find ways of doing it never so secretly and plausibly, clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be intrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or any just ways of maintaining them: Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon; the land-marks, or meer-stories, are standing witnesses to every man's right, let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars and fightings and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thine own; for that is downright robbing him, and entailing of the fraud upon posterity.

2. We may infer from hence, that a deference is to be paid in all civil matters to ancient usages, time out of mind; and the settled constitutions of government, in which it becomes us to acquiesce, lest an attempt to change it, under pretence of changing it for the better, prove of dangerous consequence.

29. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.

Here is, 1. A plain intimation, what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious, industrious man. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business?* Thou wilt not see many such, so epidemical a distemper is dulness and slothfulness. He is here commended that lays out himself to get business, though it be but in a very low and narrow sphere, and is not easy when he is out of business, that loves business, is quick and active in it, and goes through it, not only with constancy and resolution, but with dexterity and expedition; a man of dispatch, that knows how to bring a deal of business into a little compass.

2. A moral prognostication of the preferment of such a man; though now he *stands before mean men*, is employed by them, and attends upon them, yet he will rise, and is likely enough to *stand before kings*, and as ambassador to foreign kings, or prime minister of state to his own. *Seest thou a man diligent in the business of religion?* he is likely to excel in virtue, and shall stand before the King of kings.

C H A P. XXIII.

1. **W**HEN thou fittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee. 2. And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

The sin we are here warned against is luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that most easily besets us.

1. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin. *When thou fittest to eat with a ruler* thou hast great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table spread as thou hast seldom seen; thou art ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee, *Esth. v. 12*. And the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that there is a snare laid for thee; and perhaps the temptation may be stronger, and more dangerous to one that is not used to such entertainments, than to one that always sits down to a good table.

2. We are here bid to double our guard at such a time. We must, (1.) Apprehend ourselves to be in danger; *consider diligently what is before thee*, what meat and drink is before thee, that thou mayest choose that which is least for thee, and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider, what company is before thee, the ruler himself, who disorder themselves at his table. And if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with a Ruler of rulers at the Lord's table, must we *consider diligently what is before us*, that we may not in any respect eat and drink unworthily, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare.

(2.) We must frighten ourselves into temperance and moderation, *put a knife to thy throat*, i. e. restrain thyself as it were with a sword hanging over thy head from all excess. Let these words, *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you at unawares*; or those, *For all these things God shall bring thee into judgment*; or those, *Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; be a knife to the throat. The Latins call luxury, *gula*, the throat: take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abstemious, that thy craving appetite will begin to think thy throat cut, than indulge thyself in voluptuousness: We must never *feel ourselves without fear*, Jude 12. But we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us. (3.) We must reason ourselves into a holy contempt of the gratification of sense. *If thou be a man given to appetite*, thou must by a present resolution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord, restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess, *put a knife to thy throat*, that may serve for once. But that is not enough, lay the axe to the root, mortify that appetite which hath such a power over thee, *be not desirous of dainties*. Note, we ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and if we find ourselves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptations from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it, but it is lust that is desirous of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for many times they are not food convenient either for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David, instead of praying for them, prays against them, *Psal. cxli. 4*. They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them, for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which is very dainty, it doth not please, they are soon weary of it, they must have something else more dainty; a luxurious appetite the more it is humoured and indulged, the more humourous and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please; they will surfeit, but never satisfy. But especially they are upon this account deceitful meat, that while they please the body they prejudice the soul, they overcharge the heart, and disint it for the service of God, nay, they take away the heart and alienate the mind from spiritual delights, and spoil its relish of them. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?

4. Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. 5. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven.

As some are given to appetite, ver. 2. so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money (though it seem most substantial) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

1. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself, *ver. 4*. do not *aim to be rich*; to raise an estate, and to make what thou hast abundance more than it is; we must endeavour to live comfortably, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition is, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good, and design it as their highest end, *1 Tim. vi. 9*. Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree, they shall be completely happy; *cease from that wisdom*, for it is a mistake, *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth*, Luke xii. 15. Those that aim at great things,

(1.) They fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery and a perpetual hurry; but be not thou such a fool, *labour not to be rich*. What thou hast and doest be master of it, and not a slave to it, as those that *rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread*

bread of carefulness, and all to be rich. Moderate labour, *that we may have to give*, is our wisdom and duty, *Eph. iv. 28.* Immoderate labour, *that we may have to hoard*, is our sin and folly.

(2.) They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toil of care and fear; but do not thou thus vex thyself, *cease from thine own wisdom*, go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways, and setting thy wits on work to find out new inventions. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thine own, *Prov. iii. 5, 6.*

2. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself, by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying; *wilt thou be such a fool as to set thine eyes*, to cause thine eyes to fly with eagerness and violence upon *that which is not*? Note, (1.) The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature, and are the real gifts of providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul; they are not what they promise to be, nor what we expect them to be; they are a shew, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them; they are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours, they perish in the using; the fashion of them passeth away. (1.) It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them: to admire them as the best things, and appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them, as our mark at which all our actions are levelled; to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. Wilt thou do a thing so absurd in itself? What, thou a reasonable creature, wilt thou dote upon shadows? The eyes are put for rational and intellectual powers; wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? To set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind, those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professeth religion, put such an affront upon God, towards whom thine eyes should ever be, and such an abuse upon thy own soul?

2. It is not durable and abiding. Riches are very uncertain things, certainly they are so. *They make themselves wings, and flee away.* The more we cause our eyes to fly upon them, the more likely they are to flee away from us. (1.) Riches will leave us; those that hold them never so fast cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long: either they must be taken from us, or we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream, *Job xx. 28.* here to flee away as a bird.

(2.) Perhaps they may leave us suddenly; when we have taken a great deal of pains for them, and begin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits hatching upon his wealth, and brooding over it, till it is sledged, as the young ones under the hen, and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild-dove that light in his field, and call them his own, because they are upon his ground, whereas if he offers to come near them, they take wing immediately, and are gone to another man's field. (3.) The wings they flee away upon are of their own making; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are waiving in their own nature, and like a handful of dust if it be griped, it slips through the fingers. Snow will last a while, and look pretty if it be left to lie on the ground where it fell, but if gathered up and laid in the bosom it is dissolved and gone immediately. (4.) They go irresistibly, and irrecoverably, *as an eagle towards heaven*, that flies straightly, there is no stopping her, and flies out of sight and out of call, there is no bringing her back; thus do riches leave men, and leave them in grief and vexation if they set their hearts upon them.

6. Eat not thou the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats. 7. For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, faith he to thee, but his heart is not with thee. 8. The morsel which thou hast eaten, shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Those that are voluptuous and given to appetite, (*ver. 2.*) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare at home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept of every man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in uninvited. Observe,

1. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome, that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say: *Eat and drink, faith he*, because it is expected the master of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have an evil eye, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if they eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have so great a love to their money, and so little to their friends, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of themselves or their friends. The miser's feast is his penance. If a man be so very selfish and fordid and sneaking, that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he hath, he ought not to add to that the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is, that *the vile person may not be called liberal, or the churl bountiful*, *Isa. xxxii. 5.*

2. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly. *Eat not thou the bread of such a man*, let him keep it to himself. Do not sponge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thyself burdensome to any; but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are patty and not sincere. Better have a dinner of herbs and true welcome, than dainty meats without it. Therefore, (1.) Judge of the man as his mind is; thou thinkest to pay thy respect to him as a friend, so thou takest him to be, because he speaks thee fair, but *as he thinks in his heart, so is he*, not as he speaks with his tongue. That we are really both to God and man, that we are inwardly; and neither religion nor friendship are worth any thing further than they are sincere. (2.) Judge of the meat as the digestion is, and as it agrees with thee. He bids thee eat freely, but first or last he will discover his fordid, covetous humour, and *as he thinketh in his heart, so he will look*, and give thee to understand that thou art not welcome, and then *the morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up*, the very thought of that will make thee even to vomit the meat thou hast eaten, and eat the words thou hast spoken in returning his compliments, and giving him thanks for his civilities. Thou shalt lose thy sweet words, which he has given thee, and thou hast given him.

9. Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to cast pearls before swine, *Matth. vii. 6.* and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of divine things; but,

1. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be never so prudently and pertinently spoken: that will not only despise a man's words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improveable for their own edification; that they will particularly run upon, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against.

2. Those that do so, sofeit the benefit of good advice and instruction, and a wise man is not only allowed, but advised not to *speak in the ears* of such fools; let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. If what a wise man faith in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10. Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless. 11. For their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Note, (1.) The fatherless are taken under God's special protection; with him they not only find mercy shewed to them, *Hos. xiv. 3.* but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their *goel*, their near kinsman that will take their part, and stand up for them with jealousy, as thinking himself affronted in the injuries done to them. As their Redeemer, he will plead their cause against those that do them any injury, and one way or other will not only defend their right, and recover it from them, but avenge the wrongs done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, which their proudest and most powerful oppressors will find themselves an unequal match for; and that it is at their peril to contend with it.

(2.) Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights; either by a clandestine removal of the old-land-marks, or by a forcible entry into their fields. Being fatherless, they have none to right them, and, being in their childhood, they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and much more the fear of God, would restrain men from offering any injury to children, especially fatherless children.

12. Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13. Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. 16. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Here is, 1. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the scriptures and his catechism; to attend to the words of knowledge, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them; to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. The heart is then applied to the instruction, when the instruction is applied to the heart.

2. A parent correcting his child: a tender parent can scarce find in his heart to do it, it goes much against the grain, but he finds it is necessary, it is his duty, and therefore he dares not withhold correction when there is occasion for it: *Spare the rod, and spoil the child*; he beats him with the rod, gives him a gentle correction, the stripes of the sons of men, not such as we give to beasts; *beat him with the rod, and he shall not die*; the rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the present it is not joyous but grievous, both to the parent and to the child: but when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction, and delivering his soul from hell. Our great care must be about our children's souls, we must not see them in danger of hell, and must use all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

3. A parent encouraging his child, telling him, 1. What was all he expected; nothing but what would be for his own good, that *his heart be wise*, and that *his lips speak right things*; that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good government of his tongue. It is to be hoped, those will do right things when they grow up, that learn to speak right things when they are young, and dare not speak any naughty words.

2. What a comfort it would be to him if herein he answered his expectation. *If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice*, shall rejoice in thee, even mine who have taken so much care and pains about thee, mine that has many a time asked for thee, for which thou shouldst study thus to make a grateful requital. Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth, *3 John 4.* Children if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy: we shall think our labour in instructing you well bestowed, it will be a comfortable answer for the many prayers we have put up for you, we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall consequently be the easier, both to you and to ourselves. We shall rejoice in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old, that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world, and happily in another.

17. Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. 18. For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Here is, 1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering sinners: *Let not thine heart envy sinners*; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin, or the success they have in sin, it will coil them dear, and they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion *Psal. xvii. 14.* nay, it is their poison, *Prov. i. 32.* We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor with ourselves in their condition. *Let not thine heart imitate sinners*, so some read it; do not as they do, walk not in the way with them, use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our mind

at all times: *Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long*: we must be in it as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy doings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providence, and a constant care to please him; it is to be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory, and complying with his will. It is to be devoted to his fear, *Psalm cxix. 38.* and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it.

3. A good reason for both of these, *ver. 18. Surely there is an end, an end and expectation, as Jer. xxix. 11. There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked, therefore do not envy them.* *Psalm lxxiii. 17.* there will be an end of thy afflictions, therefore be not weary of them; an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, *perfect love will cast out fear,* and *thine expectation of the reward will not only be not cut off, or disappointed, but infinitely out-done.* The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

19. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. 20. Be not amongst wine-bibbers; amongst riotous eaters of flesh. 21. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. 22. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. 23. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. 24. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wife child shall have joy of him. 25. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. 26. My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. 27. For an whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. 28. She also lieth in wait as for prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children: words are put into their mouths, that they may *train them up in the way they shall go.*

Here is, 1. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents; not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions. *Hear, my son, and be wise, ver. 19.* this will be an evidence that thou art wise; and a mean to make thee wiser. *Wisdom, as Faith, comes by hearing.* And again, *ver. 22. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,* and who therefore hath an authority over thee, and an affection for thee, and thou mayest be sure can have no other design but thine own good. We ought to give reverence to the fathers of our flesh, who begat us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey and be in subjection to the Father of spirits, who made us, and is the author of our being. And since the mother also, in sense of duty to God, and in love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not despise her or her advice, *when she is old.* When the mother is grown old, we may suppose the children to be grown up, but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her, but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years, and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and think themselves not concerned to heed what an old woman saith; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having set at naught good counsel, but as having slighted and grieved a good mother, *Prov. xxx. 17.*

2. An argument to enforce this call taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, *ver. 24, 25.* Note, 1. It is the duty of children to study how they may rejoice the hearts of their good parents, and do it yet more and more, so that they may *greatly rejoice in them,* even when the evil days come, and the years of which they say they have no pleasure in them, but this, to see their children do well; as *Burzellai* to see *Chimham* prospered. 2. Children will be a joy to their parents, if they be *righteous and wise.* Righteousness is true wisdom; they that do good, do well for themselves. Those are completely such as they should be, that are not only wise, i. e. knowing and learned, but *righteous, i. e. honest and good;* and not only *righteous, i. e. conscientious and well-meaning,* but *wise, i. e. prudent and discreet in the management of themselves.* If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing to much that they have done or do for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them; particularly she that bare them with pain, and nursed them with pains, will rejoice in them, and will reckon herself well requited, and the sorrow more than forgotten, because a wife and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

3. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue. (1.) *Guide thine heart in the way, ver. 19.* It is the heart that must be taken care of and directed aright, the motions and affections of the soul must be towards right objects, and under a steady conduct. If the heart be guided in the way, the steps will be guided, and the conversation well ordered.

(2.) *Buy the truth and sell it not, ver. 23.* Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed, for without truth there is no goodness, no regular practices without rigid principles. It is by the power of truth known and believed that we must be restrained from sin, and constrained to duty: the understanding must be well informed with wisdom and instructions. And therefore, (1.) We must buy it, i. e. be willing to part with any thing for it: he doth not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate, whatever it cost us we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expence for the means of knowledge, and resolved not to strive to good a cause, then we *buy the truth*: riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it, and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it; *Dis laboribus omnia vendunt.* When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest, than to deny or neglect the truth, then we buy it, and it is a pearl of such great price, that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it; make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience. (2.) We must not sell it: do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world; do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatever. *Hold fast the form of sound words,* and never let it go upon any terms.

(3.) *Give me thine heart, ver. 26.* God, in this exhortation, speaketh to us as unto children, son, daughter, *Give me thy heart.* The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. Our thoughts must converse much with him, and on him as our highest end, *the intents of our hearts must be fastened.* We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all, or none; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* To this call we must readily answer, *My Father, take my heart,* such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it.

(4.) *Let thine eyes observe my ways;* have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence; and the good examples of his people: our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in right paths, and may proceed and persevere in them.

4. Some particular cautions against those sins, which are of all other, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it.

(1.) Gluttony and drunkenness, *ver. 20, 21.* The world is full of examples of this sin, and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against, and keep at a distance from. *Be not a wine-bibber;* we are allowed to drink a little wine, *1 Tim. v. 23.* but not much; not to make a trade of it, never to drink to excess. *Be not a riotous eater of flesh,* as the Israelites were, that lusted exceedingly after it, saying, *Who will give us flesh to eat?* Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves he will not eat flesh while the world stand, rather than make his brother to offend; to indifferent is he to it, *1 Cor. viii. 13.* *Be not an excessive eater of flesh;* intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink. *Be not a luxurious eater of flesh;* not pleased with any thing, but what is very nice and delicate, say dainty dishes, and soiced meat. Some take not only a pleasure, but a pride, in being curious about their diet, and as they call it, eating well; as if that were the ornament of a gentleman, which is really the shame of a christian; making a god of the belly. *Be not a wine-bibber, and be not a riotous eater;* and therefore, *be not among wine-bibbers, nor among riotous eaters;* do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways, and insensibly fall into those sins; or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They love to have thee among them; for those that are debauched themselves, are very desirous to debauch others: therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thyself. He fetched an argument against this sin from the expensiveness of it, and its tendency to impoverish men: and if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which lie nearest their hearts, no marvel they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the word of God, of the mischief it doth them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. *The drunkard and the glutton* hates to be reformed, though he is told he shall come to poverty; nay, though he is told he shall come to hell. Drunkenness is the cause of drowsiness; it stupifies men, and makes them mindless of business, and then all goes to wreck and ruin: Thus men that have lived creditably come to be clothed with rags.

(2.) Whoredom: That is another sin which takes away the heart, that should be given to God, *Hos. iv. 11.* He shews the danger which attends that sin, *ver. 27, 28.*

1. It is a sin from which few recover themselves, when once they are entangled in it. It is like a deep ditch, and a narrow pit, which it is almost impossible to get out of; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of it. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it; conscience, that should head the retreat, being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited.

2. It is a sin which bewitcheth men to their ruin. *The adulteress lies in wait as a robber,* pretending friendship, but intending the greatest mischief, to rob men of all they have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour, and of their ornaments. Even those that, being virtuously educated, endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will lie in wait for them, that she may assault them when they are off their guard, and she hath them at an advantage. Let none therefore be at any time secure.

3. It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom. *It increaseth the transgressors among men:* One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul, and may help to debauch a whole town. It increaseth the treacherous or perfidious ones; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives, and servants to their masters, but many that have professed religion to throw off their profession, and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the public welfare.

29. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30. They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. 31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup; when it moveth itself aright. 32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness, to confirm what he had said, *ver. 20.*

1. He cautions all people to keep out of the way of temptations to this sin, *ver. 31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red.* Red wine was in Canaan looked upon as the best wine, it is therefore called the blood of the grape. Critics judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it; some wine, they say, looks charmingly, looks so well, that it even saith, *Come and drink me;* it moves itself aright, goes down very smoothly, or perhaps the roughness of it is grateful: It is said of generous, strong-bodied wine, that it even causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak, *Cant. vii. 9.* but look not thou upon it. (1.) Be not ruled by sense, but reason and religion; covet not that which pleases the eye, in hopes that it will please the taste, but let thy serious thoughts correct the errors of thy senses, and convince thee that that which seems delightful is really hurtful, and resolve against it accordingly. Let not the heart walk after the eye, for it is a deceitful guide. (2.) Be not too bold with the charms of this or

any other sin; *look not lest thou lust, lest thou take the forbidden fruit.* Note, Those that would be kept from any sin, must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be a rid of coming within the reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

2. He shews the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness, for the enforcement of this caution. *Take heed of the bait for fear of the hook: At the last it bites, ver. 32.* All sin will be bitterness in the end, and this particularly. *It bites like a serpent:* When the drunkard is made sick by his sin, is thrown into a d'oply, or some fatal disease by it; beggared and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is awakened; and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself: but worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the drags of which he must be for ever drinking, and shall not have a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresee the punishment of it, and what it will at last end in, if repentance prevent not. In its *latter end it bites*, so the word is: think therefore what will be in the end thereof.

But he chooseth to instance in those pernicious consequences of this sin, which are present and sensible.

1. It embroils men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, ver. 29. He asks, *Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who has not in this world?* Many hath woe and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create woe and sorrow to themselves; they that have contentions have woe and sorrow; and drunkards are the fools whose lips enter into contention: When the wine is in, the wit is out, and the passions up; and thence come drunken scuffles, and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups, many a vexatious, ruining law-suit hath begun thus. There is babbling, quarrels in word, and the exchanging of scurrilous language: yet it tells not there; you shall have wounds without cause, for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of, and therefore deal blows about without the least consideration why or wherefore, and must expect to be in like manner treated themselves. The wounds which men receive in defence of their country and its just rights, are their honour; but wounds without cause, received in service of their lusts, are marks of their intamy. Nay, drunkards wound themselves in a tender part, for they have *rebels of eyes*, symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and the looks deformed. This comes, 1. Of drinking long, *twining long at the wine*, and spending that time in drunken company, which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep, which should fit for business, ver. 30. O the precious hours which thousands throw away thus; every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day! 2. Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. *They go up and down to seek wine* that will please them; their great inquiry, where is the best liquor? *They seek mixed wine*, which is most palatable, but most heady; so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate?

2. It makes men impure and insensible, ver. 33. (1.) The eyes grow unruly, and behold strange women to lust after them, and so let in adultery into the heart, *Eti Venus in vinis:* Wine is oil to the fire of lust. *Thine eyes shall behold strange things:* so I read it: When men are drunk, the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strangely to them, so that then they cannot trust their own eyes. (2.) The tongue also grows unruly, and talks extravagantly; by it the heart utters perverse things, things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility; which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous, incoherent nonsense, will men talk when they are drunk, that at another time will speak admirably well, and to the purpose.

3. It stupifies and befots men, ver. 34. When men are drunk they know not where they are, nor what they say and do. (1.) Their heads are giddy, and when they lie down to sleep, they are as if they were tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleeps are commonly unquiet and not refreshing, and their dreams tumultuous. (2.) Their judgments are clouded and muddled, and they have no more steadiness and consistency than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast; they drink and forget the law, Prov. xxx. 5. *they err through wine*, Isa. xxviii. 9. and think as extravagantly as they talk. (3.) They are mindless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under either from God or man: They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, and yet are secure and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them; they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment; *They have stricken me, and I was not sick; I felt it not;* it made no impression at all upon me: Drunkenness turns men into stocks and stones, they are scarce to be reckoned animals; they are dead while they live.

4. (Which is worse than all) the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persists in it, and hates to be reformed. *When shall I awake?* Much ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep, he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that, being thirsty in the morning, he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, *I will seek it yet again!* There is no hope; no, they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go, Jer. ii. 25. This is adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strange drink; those that do so may read their doom, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. their woe, Isa. v. 11. and if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we bid to stop at the beginning of it; *Look not upon the wine when it is red.*

C H A P. XXIV.

1. **B**E not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. 2. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Here, 1. The caution given is much the same with that which he had before, chap. xxiii. 17. not to envy sinners; not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition, though they prosper never so much in this world, and are never so merry, and never so secure. Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind; O that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; desire not to be with them, to do as they do, and fare as they fare, and to cast in thy lot among them.

2. Here is another reason given for his caution; *be not envious against them;* not only because their end will be bad, but because their way is so, ver. 2. Do not think with them, for their heart studieth destruction to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, for their lips talk of their mischief. All they say has an ill tendency; to dishonour

our God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them; nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices.

3. Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: 4. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. 5. A wise man is strong: yea a man of knowledge increaseth strength: 6. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use: But, to set aside the temptation, Solomon here shews, that a man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon it; and if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

1. That which is here recommended to us, as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity, is wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge; that is both piety towards God, for that is true wisdom, and prudence in the management of outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in every thing by the rules of religion first, and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious, do not thrive in the world for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding, and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man.

2. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom is, that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful.

(1.) It will build a house, and establish it, ver. 3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten, Hab. ii. 9, 10. whereas what is honestly got will wear like steel, and be an inheritance to children's children.

(2.) It will enrich a house, and furnish it, ver. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for encreasing what they have, that take care from luxury, and spend in charity, they are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their chambers filled with all precious and pleasant riches; precious, because got by honest labour, and the substance of a diligent man is precious; pleasant, because enjoyed with tranquillity: something more than this we understand chiefly of spiritual riches: by knowledge, the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, in precious and pleasant riches, for the Spirit, by enlightening the understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.

3. It will fortify a house, and turn it into a castle. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive. *A wise man is invincible*, is in a strong hold, yet, a man of knowledge strengtheneth his might, i. e. increaseth it, ver. 5. As we grow in knowledge we grow in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Those that increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might, Col. i. 9—11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare by true wisdom.

4. It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, ver. 6. Wisdom will erect a college or council of state. Wisdom will be of use, 1. For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause, and with some probability of success; and when they are engaged, to manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace, or an honourable retreat. *By wise counsellors thou shalt make war;* and which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence, if not done by wise counsel. 2. For the securing of the public peace; in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages, which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtil.

7. Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate. 8. He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. 9. The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Here is the description,

1. Of a weak man. *Wisdom is too high for him;* he thinks it so, and therefore despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so, he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom, those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, i. e. if they be foolish and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined, and keep bad company, it is too high for them, they are not likely to reach it. And for want of it they are unfit for the service of their country, they open not their mouth in the gate, they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or if they are, they are dumb frames, and stand for cyphers; they say nothing, because they have nothing to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing, it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.

2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so.

(1.) Such are secretly malicious. Though they speak people fair, and carry it plausibly, they devise to do evil, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at; he that doth so, shall be called a mischievous person, or a master of mischief; which perhaps was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an inventor of evil things, Rom. i. 30. or if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or a least necessary to it. This *devising evil* is the thought of foolishness, ver. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest as only a foolish thing. But really it is evil; it is exceeding sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin; it is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it; for that has in it the subtilty and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally: We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of, or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts: if vain thoughts lodge in the heart, they defile it, Jer. iv. 14. which is a reason why we should keep our hearts with

all diligence, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, *Gen. vi. 5.*

(2.) Such as are openly abusive. *The scorner*, who gives ill language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people, and reflecting upon them, he is an abomination to men, none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. *The seat of the scornful* is the *pestilential chair*, (as the Seventy call it, *Psal. i. 1.*) which no wise man will come near for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious, do but make themselves so.

10. If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Note 1. In a day of adversity we are apt to faint, to droop, and be discouraged, and desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for any thing. And many times those that are most cheerful when they are well, droop most, and are most dejected when any thing befalls them.

2. This is an evidence that our strength is small, and is a means of weakening it more. It is a sign thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith, (for that is the strength of a soul) if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition. Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble doth but befall them, *Job iv. 5.* nay, if it doth but threaten them, they faint immediately, and are ready to give up all for-gone; and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble, and unable to help themselves. *Be of good courage therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.*

11. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death: and those that are ready to be slain: 12. If thou sayest, Behold, we know it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Here is, 1. A great duty required of us, and that is, to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency; if we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned, and seeking out proofs of their innocency; though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligations to, we must help them out of a general zeal for justice: If any be set upon by force and violence, and it is in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it: Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travelers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them, and not forbear to deliver them; not to be slack, or remiss, or indifferent, in such a case.

2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly made for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, *Behold, we know it not*; we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in; we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove it, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him. Now, (1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us, when we say *we knew it not*; or we forgot: And the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong, when we know it is impossible to be disproved, but the truth lies wholly in our own breast; as to say, *we thought so and so, and really designed it*; which none is conscious to but ourselves. (2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open, and by the determination of that we must abide. Now, 1. God pondereth the heart, and keepeth the soul; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the motions of it; its most secret thoughts and intents, are all naked and open before him: It is his prerogative, and that in which he glories, *Jer. xvii. 10.* *I the Lord search the heart*: he *cup the soul*, holds it in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all that we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God, and he has graciously kept them. 2. He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no; whether it was because we did not know it, or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this leave to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience, when it chargeth us with the omission of plain duty: *Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?* 3. He will judge us accordingly: As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be bribed; but he will render to every man according to his works; not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

13. My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honey-comb, which is sweet to thy taste: 14. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom, by the consideration both of the pleasure and profit of it.

1. It will be very pleasant; we eat honey because it is sweet to the taste, and upon that account we call it good, especially that which runs first from the honey-comb. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and it was the common food of the country, *Luke xxiv. 41, 42.* even for children, *Isa. vii. 15.* Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. They that have tasted honey, need no farther proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness, are abundantly satisfied with the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world, with their sophistry, and the profane, with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

2. It will be very profitable. Honey may be sweet to the taste, and yet not wholesome, but wisdom has a future recompence attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it. Thou art permitted to eat honey, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it: But thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom; for when thou hast found that, there shall be a reward, thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dear for their pains. Wisdom doth indeed set thee to work, but there shall be a reward: it doth indeed, raise great expectations

in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope shall not be vain; *thy expectation shall not be cut off*, chap. xxiii. 18. nay, it shall be infinitely outdone.

15. Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous: spoil not his resting place: 16. For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men; they will not receive instruction, (*chap. xxiii. 9.*) but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

1. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deep, they lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous, thinking to charge some iniquity upon it, or compass some design against it: they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, *Psal. lix. title*. The hope is raised high, they doubt not but to spoil his dwelling place, because he is weak, and cannot support it; because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright.*

2. The folly and frustration of these designs.

(1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself: he falls seven times into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he riseth up again, sees through his troubles, and sees better times after them. The just man falls sometimes, falls seven times, perhaps into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation, but he riseth up again, by repentance, finds mercy with God, and regains his peace.

(2.) The wicked man, that expected to see his ruin, and to help it forward, is undone, he falls into mischief; his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

17. Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: 18. Let the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

Here, 1. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us: If any have done an ill turn, or we bear them ill will only because they stand in our light, or in our way: when any damage comes to them, suppose they fall; or any danger, suppose they stumble: our corrupt hearts receive a secret delight and satisfaction in it; *Aha, so would we have it, they are entangled, the wilderness hath shut them in*: Or, as *Tyrus* said concerning *Jerusalem*, *Ezek. xxvi. 2.* *I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste*: Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge, or to find their account; but be not thou so inhuman; rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast fallest: There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, *Psal. lvi. 10.* but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep, even with them when they weep, as *David* *Psal. xxxv. 13, 14.* and that in sincerity; not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

2. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God, is assigned as the reason of that prohibition. The Lord will see it, though it be hid in the heart only, and it will displease him; as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. He adds an argument *ad hominem*; thou canst not do a greater kindness to thine enemy, when he is fallen, than to rejoice in it; for then, to cross thee, and vex thee God will turn his wrath from him; for as the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that, he will adjourn the executions of his wrath: Nay, it is implied, that when he turns his wrath from him, he will turn it against thee, and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand.

19. Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked. 20. For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Here, 1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasure and successes of wicked men in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father *David*, *Psal. xxxvii. 1.* We must not in any case fret ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God hath in his providence; how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it: Even that which grieves us must not fret us; nor must our eye be evil against any because God is good: Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do.

2. He gives a reason for this creation, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in? Envy not their prosperity; for 1. There is no true happiness in it: There shall be no reward to the evil man; his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence; there are all the good things he must even expect; there is none intended him in the world of retribution; He hath his reward, *Matt. vi. 2.* He shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life, and must outlive it, *Psal. xxii. 14.* 2. There is no continuance in it: Their candle shines bright, but it shall presently be put out, and a final period put to all their comforts, *Job xxi. 17.* *Psal. xxxvii. 1, 2.*

21. My son, fear thou the LORD, and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change. 22. For their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Note, 1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God hath set over us, *Rom. xii. 1, 2.* Those that are truly religious will be loyal, in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the quiet in the land; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince, that is

is false to his God? And if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case, we must *obey God rather than men*.

2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. I have nothing to do, he doth not say, with them that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but *thou art given to change*, that affect it not change sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is, and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters. *Meddle not with them that are given to change*, either in religion, or in the civil government; *come not into their secret*, join not with them into their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware. *Their calamity shall rise suddenly*: Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment when they little think of it. *Who knows the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them and them that meddle with them.*

23. These things also belong to the wife. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24. He that faith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25. But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26. Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.

Here are lessons for wife men, i. e. judges and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in pleas of the crown, and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

1. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to the parties concerned. *It is not good in itself, nor can it ever do well, to have respect of persons in judgment*; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice, and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend and help him out in a bad cause; or so much as omit anything that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

2. They must never give any connivance or encouragement to wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully with the wicked man, though he be a great man or a particular friend; to convict him of his wickedness, to shew him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to shew people their transgressions, palliate them and connive at them; if they excuse the wicked man, much more if they prefer and associate with him, which is, in effect, to say, *Thou art righteous*, they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare which they ought to advance, and the people shall curse them, and cry out shame on them; and even those of other nations shall abhor them, as base traitors of the trust.

3. They must discountenance and give check to all fraud and violence, injustice, and immorality; and though thereby they may disoblige particular persons, yet they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates, and ministers, and private persons too, that are capable of doing it, rebuke the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance, or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms; *to them shall be a light*, when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; and *good blessing shall come upon them*, the blessing of God and good men; they shall be deemed religious patrons, and their country's patriots. See Prov. xxviii. 23.

4. They must always give judgment according to equity, ver. 26. *Give a right answer*, i. e. give their opinion, and pass sentence according to law and the true merits of the cause, and *every one shall kiss his lip that doth so*, i. e. shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently, and with sincerity, recommends himself to his company, and is beloved and respected by all.

27. Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble and disgrace to their profession.

1. We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not lay that out for shew, which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for food convenient.

2. We must not think of building till we can afford it; first apply thyself to *thy work without in the field*, let thy ground be put into good order, look after thy husbandry, for that is it by which thou must get, and when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of re-building and beautifying thy house, for that is it upon which, and in which thou wilt have occasion to spend. Many have ruined their estates and families, by laying out money on that which brings nothing in; and beginning to build, when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as an advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and got wherewith to maintain a wife and child comfortably.

3. When we have any great design on foot, it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God, all was made ready before it was brought to the ground, 1 Kings vi. 7.

28. Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause: and deceive not with thy lips. 29. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law; either, 1. As a witness: Never bear a testimony against any man without cause, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true; and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one; for it follows, *deceive not with thy lips*; deceive not thy judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou convertest with into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of

thy neighbour, do not only speak that which is true, but take heed, lest in the manner of thy speaking thou intimate any thing that is otherwise, and so shouldst deceive by insinuations or hyperboles.

Or, 2. As a plaintiff, or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge: *Say not, I am resolved I will meet with him, I will do so to him as he hath done to me*: even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous, when it is thus prosecuted with malice: *Say not, I will render to the man according to his work*, and make him pay dear for it; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal. Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he hath said, *Vengeance is mine*.

30. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: 31. And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down. 32. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Here is, 1. The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subject's management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field, and vineyard, unlike all the rest; for though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles: not here and there one, but they were all over-run with weeds; and if there had been any fruit, it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence. *The stone wall broken down*. See the effects of that curse upon the ground, Gen. iii. 18. *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*, and nothing else, unless thou take pains with it. See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this ear of even Canaan itself would be without it: *The king himself is served of the field*, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman's diligence to rid the ground, plant it, and sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of the most bountiful affluence, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifest effects of it, to all they pass by, shamed by their neighbour's diligence.

2. The reflections which he made on it. He paused a little, and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction: He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation, and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others, must receive instruction themselves: And instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see; not only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of men; not only from men's good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, That wise men profit more by fools, than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men. Solomon reckoned he received instruction by his sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard, who when he has needful work to do lies dozing in bed, and cries, *yet a little sleep, a little slumber*, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dulled and stupified, and made good for nothing. And of the certain misery that attends him, his poverty comes as one that travelleth, it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and will seize him as irresistibly as an armed man, a highway-man that will strip him of all he hath.

Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to shew what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note, 1. Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of to dress and to keep. They are capable of being improved with good husbandry, that may be got out of them, which will be fruit abounding to our account. And we are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord comes; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite we should take about them. 2. These fields and vineyards are very often in an ill posture; not only no fruit brought forth, but all over-grown with thorns and nettles, scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes which the un sanctified heart produceth; no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone wall broken down; all lies in common, all exposed. 3. Where it is thus it is long of the sinner's own slothfulness and folly; he is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour, and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest, he is perfectly befuddled. 4. The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul, and all its welfare. It is everlasting want thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

C H A P. XXV.

1. THESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

This verse is the title of this latter collection of Solomon's proverbs, for he sought out and set in order many proverbs, that by them he might be still teaching the people knowledge, Eccles. xii. 9. Observe,

1. The Proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver for the use of the church these wise and weighty sentences. We have had many, but still there are more; yet herein Christ is greater than Solomon, for if we had all upon record that Christ said and did that was instructive, the world could not contain the books that should be written, John xxi. 25.

2. The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who, it is likely, herein acted as his servants, being appointed by him to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, 2 Chron. xxxi. 21. Whether he employed the prophets in this work

work as Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving a charge concerning divine things, 2 *Cor.* xix. 4. Or, (as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of state; who were more properly called his servants, is not certain; if it was done by Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Shubna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of this book. It may be a piece of very good service to the church to publish other men's works that have lain hid in obscurity, perhaps a great while. Some think they called these out of the three thousand proverbs which Solomon spoke, 1 *Kings* iv. 32. Having out those that were physical, and that pertained to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were divine and moral; and in this collection some observe that special regard was had to those observations that concern kings and their administration.

2. *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.* 3. *The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unfearchable.*

Here is, 1. An instance given of the honour of God; *It is his glory to conceal a matter.* He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hid from him; and yet his own way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, *Rom.* xi. 33. It is but a little portion that is heard of him. Clouds and darkness are round about him. We see what he doth, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is his glory to pardon sin, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance which he exercises towards sinners, is like wife his honour, in which he seems to keep silence, and take no notice of the matter.

2. A double instance of the honour of kings.

1. It is God's glory that he needs not search into a matter, because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of inquiry to search out the matters that are brought before them; to take pains in examining offenders, that they may discover their designs, and bring to light the hidden works of darkness; not to give judgment presently till they have weighed things; not to leave it wholly to others to examine things; but to see with their own eyes.

2. It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is devolved upon kings, wise kings that search out matters; their hearts are unfearchable, like the height of heaven, or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their *arcana imperii*, designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they search into a matter, have reasons which one would not think of, as Solomon when he called for a sword to divide the living child with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

4. *Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.* 5. *Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*

This shews that the vigorous endeavours of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe, 1. What the duty of magistrates is, to take away the wicked, to use their power for the terrors of evil works, and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and profane from their presence, and forbid them the court, but so to frighten and restrain them, that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called *taking away the dross from the silver*, which is done by the force of fire. Wicked people are the dross of the nation, the scum of the country, and as such to be taken away: if men will not do it, God will, *Psal.* cix. 119. If the wicked be taken away from before the king, if he abandon them and shew his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far towards the disabling them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the reformation of the kingdom, *Psal.* ci. 3—8.

2. What the advantage will be of their doing this duty. (1.) It will be bettering of the subjects, they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made vessels of honour. (2.) It will be the settling of the prince: *his throne shall be established in this righteousness*; for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

6. *Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men.* 7. *For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither: than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.*

Here we see, 1. That religion is so far from destroying good manners, that it teaches us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently towards our betters, to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs: *Put not forth thyself rudely and carelessly in the king's presence*, or in the presence of great men; do not compare with them, (so some understand it) do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, house-keeping, or retinue, for that is an affront to them, and will waste thine own estate.

2. That religion teacheth us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners. Deny thyself the place thou art entitled to, covet not to make a fair shew, nor aim at preferment, nor thrust thyself into the company of those that are above thee; be content in a low sphere, if that is it which God has allotted to thee; the reason he gives is because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shews in a parable that seems to be borrowed from this, *Luke* xiv. 9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it for the courting of honour, but therefore we must really be modest and humble, for God will put honour on such, and so will men too. And it is better, more for a man's satisfaction and reputation to be advanced above his pretensions and expectations, than to be thrust down below them; in the presence of the prince, whom it was a great piece of honour to be admitted to the sight of, and a great piece of presumption to look upon without leave.

8. ¶ *Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour*

hath put thee to shame. 9. *Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:* 10. *Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.*

Here is a good counsel given about going to law:

1. Not to be hasty in bringing an action, before thou hast thyself considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it: *Go not forth hastily to strive*, do not tend for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side, but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause; consider the certainty of the expences, and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and after all, the cause may go against thee, and then sure thou wilt not go forth hastily to strive.

2. Nor before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably, *ver. 9. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour privately*, and perhaps you will understand one another better, and see that there is no occasion to go to law. In public quarrels, the war that must at length end, it might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels; sue not thy neighbour as a *heathen man and a publican*, until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret not fit to be divulged to any, much less to be brought upon a stage before the country, and therefore end it privately that it may not be discovered. *Reveal not the secrets of another, so some read it.* Do not, in revenge, to disgrace thine adversary, disclose that which should be kept private, and which doth not at all belong to the cause.

Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law, 1. Because otherwise the cause will be in danger to go against us, and thou wilt not know what to do when the defendant hath justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious, and thou hadst no just cause of action, and so put thee to shame, non est tibi, and force thee to pay costs. All which might have been prevented by a little consideration. 2. Because it will turn very much to our reproach, if we fall under the character of being litigious. Not only the defendant himself, *ver. 8.* but he that hears the cause tried, will put thee to shame, will ex. ore thee as a man of no principle, and thine infamy will not turn away, thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation.

11. *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* 12. *As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprov-er upon an obedient ear.*

Solomon here shews how much 't becomes a man,

1. To speak pertinently. *A word upon the wheels that runs well*, is well circumstanced in a person and place, instruction, advice or comfort given seasonably, and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person that hearken to, and agreeing with the character of the person speaking, is like golden balls re-embroidered with the colour of a golden colour, (golden remembrance), or perhaps gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and so seem to be in pictures of silver; or rather brought to table in a silver net-work or skein, or in a silver box of that which we call philligree-work, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless it was some ornament of the table then well known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is a word fitly spoken to the ear.

2. Especially to give a reproof with discretion, and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given, by a wise reprov-er, and well taken by an obedient ear, it is an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, very graceful and well becoming both the reprov-er and the reprov-ed, both will have the praise, the reprov-er for giving it so prudently, and the reprov-ed for taking it so patiently, and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other; he that gave the reproof is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. *That is well given*, we say, *that is well taken*; yet it doth not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to be wished that a wise reprov-er should always meet with an obedient ear, but often it is not so.

13. *As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.*

See here, 1. What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent on an errand, and entrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince, he ought to be faithful to him that sends him, and to see to it that he do not, by mistake or with design, falsify his trust, and that he be in nothing, that lies in his power, wanting to his master's interest. Those that act as factors by commission, ought to act as carefully as for themselves.

(2.) How much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will refresh his soul, as much as ever the cold of snow (which in hot countries they preserve by art all the year round) was to the labourers in the harvest, that bore the burden and heat of the day. And the more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger, if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us, *Job* xxiii. 33. however, he will be a sweet savour to God, 2 *Cor.* ii. 15.

14. *Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.*

He may be said to boast of a false gift,

1. Who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, which he never gave; makes a noise of his great accomplishments, and his good services; but it is all false; he is not what he takes on him to be. Or,

2. Who promiseth what he will give, and what he will do, but performs nothing. Raising people's expectations of the mighty things he will do for his country, for his friends, what noble legacies he will leave, but either he has not wherewithal, or he never designs it. Such a one is like the morning cloud, that passeth away and disappoints those that looked for rain from it to water the parching ground, *Jude* 12. *Clouds without water.*

15. *By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.*

Two

Two things are here recommended to us in dealing with others, as likely means to gain our point :

1. Patience, to bear a present heat without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons, and to give them time to consider them. By this means even a *prince* may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. That which is justice and reason now will be so another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season.

1. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation: *A soft tongue breaketh the bone*, i. e. mollifies the roughest spirits, and overcomes those that are most morose; like lightning, which they say, sometimes has broke the bone and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon with a soft tongue, pacified the Ephraimites, and Abigail turned away David's wrath. *Hard words*, we say, *break no bones*, and therefore we should bear them patiently, but it seems *soft words* do, and therefore we should, on all occasions, give them prudently.

16. Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Here, 1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense: *Hast thou found honey?* it is not forbidden fruit to thee, as it was to Jonathan, thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. *Eat as much as is sufficient*, and no more; *Enough is as good as a feast*.

2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess: we must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than doth us good, and make ourselves sick with it. We are more in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day, have need to watch over themselves, *lest their hearts be at any time overcharged*. The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness by the excessive use of them, and become nauseous; as honey that turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.

17. Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

Here he instanceeth in another pleasure which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends; the former for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this for fear of surfeiting our neighbour.

1. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to shew our respect to them and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation.

2. It is wisdom as well as good manners not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting of them. Not to visit too often, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time; nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their family, hereby we make ourselves cheap, and mean, and burdensome. Thy neighbour that is thus plagued and haunted with thy visits, will be weary of thee and hate thee, and that will be the destruction of friendship which should have been the improvement of it. *Post tres ferpe dies piscis vilescit & hospes*. Familiarity breeds contempt. *Nulli te facias nimis familiaris*. He that spungeth upon his friend, loatheth him. How much better friend then is God than any other friend; for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace. *Prov. viii. 37.* the oftener we come to him the better, and the more welcome.

18. A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour, is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, 1. The sin condemned, is *bearing false witness against our neighbour*, either in judgment, or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment.

2. That which it is here condemned for is the mischief, usefulness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men's reputation, but their lives, estates, families, and all that is dear to them; a false testimony is every thing that is dangerous, it is a *maul* or *club* to knock a man's brains out, a *snail*, that there is no fence against; it is a *sword* to wound near at hand, and a *sharp arrow* to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, *deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, *Psal. cxx. 2.*

19. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

1. The confidence of an unfaithful man (so some read it) will be like a broken tooth; his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wickedness will fail him in time of trouble, *Psal. lxxvii. 7.*

3. Confidence in an unfaithful man, so we read it, in a man that we thought trusty, and therefore depended on him, but proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable but painful and vexatious, like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, which when we put any stress upon it, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it. Especially in time of trouble, when we most expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, *Isa. xxxvi. 6.* Confidence in a faithful God in time of trouble will not prove thus: on him we may rest, and in him dwell at ease.

20. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre: so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

1. The absurdity here mentioned is *singing songs to an heavy heart*. Those that are in great sorrow to be comforted by sympathizing with them, condoling them, and concurring in their lamentations, if we take that method, the moving of our lips may assuage their grief, *Job. xvi. 5.* But we take a wrong course with them, if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry, for that adds to their grief, to see their friends so little concerned for them, it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

2. The absurdities this is compared to are *taking away a garment from a* Vol. II. No. C1.*

man in cold weather, which makes him colder, or pouring vinegar upon nitre, which like water upon lime puts it into a ferment, so in proper, so incongruous is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense; *As he that puts on a garment in cold weather* which warms the body, or *vinegar upon nitre* which dissolves it, so he that sings songs, of comfort to a person in sorrow, refresheth him, and dispels his grief.

21. If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

By this it appears, that however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies was not only a new, but an old commandment; an old testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it us with the new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies.—Observe,

1. How we must express our love to our enemies, by the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves, and most acceptable to them; if they be hungry and thirsty, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress, and contriving how to cut off supplies for them, relieve them, as Elisha did the Syrians that came to ap, refresh him, *2 Kings vi. 22.*

2. What encouragement we have to do so. (1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend, is to carry it kindly to him. Or if it do not gain him it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head, as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, *chap. xxiv. 17.* (2.) However we shall be no losers by our self-denial; whether he relent towards thee or no, the Lord shall reward thee: he shall forgive thee who thus sheweth thyself to be of a forgiving spirit: he shall provide for thee when thou art in distress, though thou hast been evil and ungrateful, as thou dost for thine enemy. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindnesses to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shewn to God's friends.

23. The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Here, see, 1. How we must discourage sin, and witness against it, and particularly the sin of slander and backbiting, we must shew upon it, and by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance: Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer, if he saw that his tales displeased the company. We should shew ourselves uneasy, if we heard a dear friend, whom we value, evil spoken of; the same dislike we should shew of evil speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks.

2. The good effect which this might probably have; who knows but it may silence and drive away a backbiting tongue? in, if it be countenanced, becomes daring, but if it receive any check, it is so conscious of its own shame, that it becomes sneaking, and thus part curlew; for any abuse those they speak of, only in hopes to curry favour with those they speak to.

24. It is better to dwell in the corner of the house top, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

This is the same with what he had said, *chap. xxi. 9.*

Observe, 1. How those are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious, whether husband or wife; for it is equally true of both. It is better to be alone, than to be joined to one, who instead of being a meet-help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life.

2. How those may sometimes be envied that live in solitude; as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, Blessed is the womb that has not borne, so there are which give occasion to say, Blessed is the man never married, but lies like a servant in a corner of the house-top.

25. As cold waters to a thirsty soul: so is good news from a far country.

See here, 1. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect to hear from abroad, or souls thirst after it; but we should check the inordinancy of that desire; if it be bad news it will come too soon, if good, it will be welcome at any time.

2. How acceptable such good news will be when it doth come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence by his ambassadors with foreign courts, and how pleasant it was to hear of the good success of his negotiations abroad, he well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off, how refreshing it is to hear good news from thence, both in the everlasting gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children!

26. A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a public grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the muddying of a fountain, and the corrupting of a spring, for the righteous to fall down before the wicked; that is,

1. For the righteous to fall into sin in the sight of the wicked, for them to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashlon, and in which the daughters of the Philistines rejoice: for them that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour to fall from their excellency, thus troubles the fountains by grieving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others, and emboldening them to do likewise.

2. For the righteous to be oppressed, and run down, and trampled upon by the violence or subtilty of evil men, to be displaced, and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice, and corrupting the very springs of government, *chap. xxviii. 12—28.—xxix. 2.*

3. For the righteous to be cowardly, to sneak and truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness, and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like a *troubled fountain*, and a *corrupt spring*.

37. *It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.*

Two things we must be graciously dead to.

1. To the pleasures of sense, for *it is not good to eat much honey*, though it please the taste, and is eaten with moderation is very wholesome, yet if eaten to excess it becomes nauseous, breeds choler, and is the occasion of many diseases; which is true of all the delights of the children of men, they will surfeit out never satisfy, and they are dangerous to those that allow themselves the liberal use of them.

2. To the praise of men. We must not be greedy of that no more than of pleasure, because, *for men to search their own glory*, to court applause, and covet to make themselves popular, it is not their glory to do so, but their shame, every one will laugh at them for it; and the glory which is to be courted, when it is got is *not glory*, it is really no true honour to a man.

Some give another sense of this verse; *to eat much honey is not good*, but to search into glorious and excellent things is a great commendation, it is true glory; we cannot therein offend by excess. Others thus; as honey, though pleasant to the taste, if used immoderately, oppresseth the stomach, so an over-curious search into things sublime and glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far, will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory and lustre than they can bear. Or thus; you may be surfeited with eating too much honey, but the lust of glory, of their glory, the glory of the blessed is glory, it will be ever fresh, and never pall the appetite.

28. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Here is, 1. The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied; he is one that hath *rule over his own spirit*, he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and doth not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order.

2. The bad case of a vicious man, that has not this rule over his own spirit, that when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself, when he is provoked, breaks out into exorbitant passions, such an one is *like a city that is broken down, and without walls*, all that is good goes out, and forsakes him; all that is evil breaks in upon him, he lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan, and becomes an easy prey to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him, as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, *Neh. i. 3.*

C H A P. XXVI.

1. **A**S snow in summer, and as rain in harvest; so honour is not seemly for a fool.

Note, 1. It is too common a thing for honour to be given to fools, that are utterly unworthy of it, and unfit for it: ill men, that have neither wit nor grace, are sometimes preferred by princes, and applauded and cried up by the people: *Folly is set in great dignity*, as Solomon observed, *Ecc. x. 6.*

2. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so. It is as incongruous as snow in summer, and as great a disorder in the commonwealth, as that is in the course of nature, and in the seasons of the year; nay, it is as injurious as rain in harvest, which hinders the labourers, and spoils the fruits of the earth when they are ready to be gathered. When bad men are in power, they commonly abuse their power, in discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wickedness, for want of wisdom to discern it, and grace to detect it.

2. As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

Here is, 1. The folly of passion; it makes men scatter *causeless curses*; wishing ill to others upon presumption that they are ill, and have done ill, when either they mistake the person, or misunderstand the fact; or call evil good, and good evil. Give honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathemas against all that he has any disgust to, right or wrong. Great men that are wicked, think they have a privilege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing them, and swearing at them; which yet is an expression of the most impotent malice, and shews their weakness, as much as their wickedness.

2. The safety of innocency. He that is cursed without cause, whether by furious imprecations, or solemn anathemas, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head, than Goliath's curses did to David, *1 Sam. xvii. 43.* It will fly away like the sparrow or the wild dove, that go nobody knows whither, till they return to their proper place, as the curse will at length return upon the head of him that uttered it.

3. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

Here, 1. Wicked men are compared to the horse, and the ass, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force or fear; so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves! Man indeed is *born like the wild ass's colt*, but, as some, by the grace of God, are changed and become rational, so others, by custom in sin are hardened, and become more and more sottish, as the horse and the mule, *Psal. xxxii. 9.*

2. Direction is given to use them accordingly: Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool, ver. 1. must put disgrace upon him, instead of putting power into his hand, must exercise power over him. A horse unbroken needs a whip for correction, and an ass a bridle for direction, and to check him when he would turn out of the way: so a vicious man that will not be under the conduct and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipped and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made to smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.

4. Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. 5. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

See here the noble security of the scripture stile, which seems to contradict itself, but really doth not. Wise men have need to be directed how to deal with fools; and they have never more need of wisdom than in dealing with such, to know when to keep silence, and when to speak, for there may be a time for both.

1. In some cases a wise man will not set his wit to that of a fool, so far as to answer him according to his folly. If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thyself: If he rail and talk passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately too: If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another to match it. If he calumniate thy friends, do not thou calumniate his: If he banter, do not answer him in his own language, *lest thou be like him*; even thou who knowest better things; who hast more sense, and hast been better taught.

2. Yet in other cases a wise man will use his wisdom for the conviction of a fool, and when by taking notice of what he saith, there may be hopes of doing good, or at least preventing further mischief, either to himself or others. If thou hast reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the weakness of thy cause, or of thine own weakness, in such a case, answer him, and let it be an answer *ad hominem*, beat him at his own weapons, and that will be an answer *ad rem*, or as good as one. If he offers any thing that looks like an argument, answer that, and suit thine answer to his case. If he think, because thou dost not answer him, what he saith is unanswerable, then give him an answer, *lest he be wise in his own conceit*, and boast of a victory: For, *Luke vii. 35.* wisdom's children must justify her.

6. He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. 7. The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 8. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling: so is he that giveth honour to a fool. 9. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

To recommend wisdom to us, and to quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shews that fools are fit for nothing; sottish men that will never think and design at all, and vicious men that will never think and design well.

1. They are not fit to be intrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand, ver. 6. *He that doth but send a message by the hand of a fool*, of a careless, heedless person, one that is so full of his jests, and so given to his pleasures, that he cannot apply his mind to any thing that is serious, he will find his message misinterpreted, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it, that he had as good have cut off his legs, i. e. never have sent him; nay, he will drink damage, i. e. it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him and put a trick upon him; for, in Solomon's language, a knave and a fool are of the same signification. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the matter by his messenger.

2. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them; he had said, ver. 1. that *honour is not seemly for a fool*; here he shews that it is lost, and thrown away upon him; as if a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stone, where it would be buried, and of no use; it is as absurd, as if a man should dress up a stone in purple, so covers; nay, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to do hurt; to give honour to a fool, is to put a sword in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to those that put it into his hand.

3. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should they undertake to handle any matter of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it, and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them, and applies them, in such a manner, that one may know he doth not rightly understand them, lose their excellency and usefulness: *A parable in the mouth of fools* ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man that lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously, and takes God's covenant into his mouth.

(1.) He doth shame himself and his profession: *As the legs of the lame are not equal*, by reason of which their going is indecent, so indecent is it for a fool to pretend to speak apothegms, and give advice; and for a man to talk devoutly, whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk, and gives him the lie. His good words raise him up, but then his ill life takes him down, and so his legs are not equal. "A wise saying saith Bishop Patrick doth as ill become a fool, as dancing doth a cripple;" for as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, "so the other's folly is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise." As therefore it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly man, and an ill man, to hold his tongue.

(2.) He doth but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard doth with a thorn, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well, and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation, and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it; the sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, doth make no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn doth upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not, nor complains of it, *chap. xxiii. 35.*

10. The great God that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text, and in the margin; and accordingly it speaks; either,

1. The equity of a good God. The Master, or Lord, (so *Rab* signifies) or, as we read it, *The great God that formed all things* at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work: He rewards the fool, who sinned through ignorance, who knew not his Lord's will, with few stripes; and he rewards the transgressor, that sins presumptuously, and with a high hand; that knew his Lord's will, and would not do it, he shall be beaten with many stripes. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence, even to fools and transgressors, on whom he causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall. Or it speaks,

2. The iniquity of an ill prince; so the margin reads it; *A great man grieveth all; and he hireth the fool, he hireth also the transgressors.* When a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and the fools and knaves he employs under him; that he hires, and chooseth to make use of; he grieves

grieves all that are under him, and is vexations to them. We should therefore *pray for kings, and all in authority*, that under them our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11. As a dog returneth to his vomit; so a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, 1. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is made to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it, and to be willing to part with it. It is in itself, and first or last will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, *Psalms xxxvi. 2.*

2. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding; as the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burdened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners that have been convinced only, and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. The apostle applies this proverb to those that *have known the way of righteousness, but are turned from it*, 2 Pet. ii. 22. but God will *spew them out of his mouth*, Rev. iii. 16.

12. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Here is, 1. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit. *Seest thou a man?* yes, we see many a one, *wise in his own conceit*; that has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more; has such a conceit of his own abilities, as make him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of his knowledge is, that it puffeth him up. Or, if by a wise man we understand a religious man, it speaks the character of those, who, making some shew of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad, like Laodicea, *Rev. iii. 17.*

2. The danger of this disease, it is in a manner desperate, *there is more hope of a fool*, that knows, and owns himself to be so, than of such a one. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom, and his observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult, and least successful, with those that had a good opinion of themselves, and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore he that *seems to himself to be wise, must become a fool that he may be wise*, 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is more hope of a publican than of a proud pharisee, *Matt. xxi. 32.* Many are hindered from being truly wise and religious, by a false and groundless conceit that they are so, *John x. 40, 41.*

13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly, we say, he talks idly, for none betray their folly more than those who are idle, and go about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As men's idleness makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe,

1. What the slothful man really dreads; he dreads *the way, the streets*, the place where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour.

2. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread, *a lion in the way*. When he is pressed to be diligent either in his worldly affairs, or in the business of religion, this is his excuse (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none) *There is a lion in the way*, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions used to be in woods, in deserts; and in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, *Psalms civ. 22, 23.* But the sluggard fancies, or rather pretends to fancy, *a lion in the streets*, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties, *Eccles. xi. 4.*

14. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease; he lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but still in his bed, when it is far in the day, and work is to be done; as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected, and his opportunities let slip. See the sluggard's character:

1. He is one that doth not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, *as the door upon the hinges*. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. They that love sleep, will prove in the end to have loved death.

2. He doth not care to go forward with his business, in that he stirs to and fro a little, but to no purpose; he is where he was. Slothful professors turn in profession like *the door upon the hinges*. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung, and though they move in a course of external services, are got into a road of duties; and tread around in them like the horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven: Sinners unchanged, saints unimproved.

15. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard is now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might as good have lain there still for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work, so awkwardly doth he go about it. Observe,

1. The pretence he makes for his slothfulness: He *hides his hand in his bosom*, for fear of cold; next to his warm bed, is his warm bosom; or, pretending that he is lame; as some do that make a trade of begging; something ails his hand, he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday's hard work; or, it speaks in general his aversion to business; he has tried, and his hands are not used to labour, and therefore he hugs himself in his own ease, and cares for nobody. Note, It is common for those that will not do their duty, to pretend they cannot. *I cannot dig*, *Luke xvi. 3.*

2. The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness; he himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself; *it grieveth him to bring his hand to his mouth*, i. e. he cannot find in his heart to feed himself, but dreads it, as a mighty toil to lift his hand to his head. It is an elegant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure to take the least pains, no, not for the greatest profit, and shewing how his sin is his punishment. Those that are slothful

in the business of religion, will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, 1. The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness. He thinks himself *wiser than seven men*, than seven wise men, for they are such as *can render a reason*. It is the wisdom of a man, to be able to *render a reason*; of a good man, to be able to give a *reason of the hope that is in him*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. What we do we should be able to *render a reason* for, though, perhaps, we may not have wit enough to shew the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it: he knows he is working for a good matter, and that *his labour shall not be in vain*. But the sluggard thinks himself *wiser than seven* such; for let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose, his own wildness, he thinks, answers enough to them, and all their reasons.

2. The reference that this has to his slothfulness. It is *the sluggard*, above all men, that is thus self-conceited; for, 1. His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; therefore he will not take pains to get wisdom, because he thinks he is wise enough already. A conceit of the sufficiency of our attainment is a great enemy to our improvement. 2. His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of prevailing self-conceit. Nay, 3. So wretchedly befitted is he, that he takes slothfulness to be his wisdom; he thinks it his wisdom to make much of himself, and take all the ease he can get, and do no more in religion than he needs must, to avoid suffering; to sit still and see what other people do, that he may have the pleasure of finding fault with them. Of such sluggards who are proud of that which is their shame there is little hope, *Jer. 12.*

17. He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

1. That which is here condemned is *meddling with strife that belongs not to us*. If we must not be hasty to strive in our own cause, *chap. xxv. 8.* much less in other peoples, especially theirs that are no way related to, or concerned in, but light on accidentally as we pass by. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance, we must do it, though we should thereby get the ill-will of both sides, at least while they are in their heat; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation. *Who made me a judge?* Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves.

2. Therefore we are cautioned against it, because of the danger it exposeth us to; it is like taking a snaring ear *by the ears*, that will snap at you, and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank your lives if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got a dog by the ears, if he let him go, he flies at him; if he keep his hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one *with quietness work, and mind his own business*; and not with unquietness quarrel, and meddle with other peoples business.

18. As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death: 19. So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

See here, 1. How mischievous those are that make no conscience of *deceiving their neighbours*; they are *as mad men that cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*; so much hurt may they do by their deceptions: They value themselves upon it, as politic, cunning men, but really they are *as mad men*. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate, furious man, but the malicious, deceitful man, that is a *mad man*; he doth in effect *cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*; he doth more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like fire-brands, kill, even at a distance, like arrows.

2. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in jest; with this they think to turn it off when they are reproved for it, *Am not I in sport?* but it will prove dangerous, laying wit fire, and jesting with edge-tools. Not that those are to be commended who are capacious, and can take no jest, that themselves are *wise must suffer fools*, 2 Cor. xi. 19, 20. but those are certainly to be condemned, who are any way abusive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them, or tells lies of them, give them ill language, or put them in an ill name, and then think to excuse it by saying they did but jest; *am not I in sport?* He that sins in jest must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbour. By lying and flandering in jest, men learn themselves, and teach others to lie and slander in earnest; and a false report raised in mirth, may be spread in malice; and if a man may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not make himself rich, and so *truth quite perishest*, and men *teach their tongue to tell lies*. *Jer. ix. 5.* If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, fire that would spoil the sport of it; it is *casting arrows and death* to themselves.

20. Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so when there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. 21. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. 22. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Contention is a fire, it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife, and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace,

1. We must not give ear to *tale-bearers*, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter; the tales they carry

carry are fire-balls; they that by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families, and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease, as the fire will go out when it has no fuel; the contenders will better understand one another, and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten, when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered.

To illustrate this he repeats, *ver. 22.* what he had said before, *chap. xviii. 8.* that *the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds*, deep and dangerous wounds, wounds in the vitals; they wound the reputation of him who is belied, and, perhaps, the wound proves incurable, and even the plaster of a recantation, (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it; they wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoken ought to have for his neighbour, and give a fatal stab to friendship and christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be tale-bearers ourselves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but should not give the least countenance to those that are.

2. We must not associate with peevish, passionate people, that are exceptions, and apt to put the worst constructions upon every thing; that pick quarrels upon the least occasions, and are quick and high, and hot in resenting affronts, these are *contentious men that kindle strife*, *ver. 21.* The less we have to do with such the better, for it will be very hard not to quarrel with those that are quarrelsome.

23. Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

This may be meant either,

1. Of a wicked heart shewing itself in burning lips, i. e. furious, passionate, outrageous words, burning in malice, and persecuting to those to whom, or of whom they are spoken; ill words and ill will, agree as well together as a potsherd, and the dross of silver, which, now the pot is broken, and the dross separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghill.

2. Or of a wicked heart disguising itself with burning lips, i. e. burning with professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries, this is like a potsherd covered with the scum or dross of silver, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat. This sense agrees with the following verses.

24. He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him. 25. When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. 26. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in men's profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend, nor will serve their friends so much as they promise, but, which is much worse of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing, *ver. 24.* He that hates his neighbour, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet dissembleth with his lips, professeth to have a respect for him, and to be ready to serve him, talks friendly with him, as Cain with Abel, asks, *Art thou in health, my brother?* as Joab to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected, and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it. He lays up deceit within him, i. e. he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour, till he catcheth him at an advantage. This is malice which has no less of the subtilty than it has of the venom of the old serpent in it.

Now as to this matter we are here cautioned,

1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair, be not too forward to believe him, unless you know him well, for it is possible there may be seven abominations in his heart, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him, for there are seven abominations in his heart, seven other spirits doth one unclean spirit bring more wicked than himself.

2. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for though the fraud may be carried on plausibly awhile, it will be brought to light, *ver. 26.* He whose hatred is covered by deceit, one time or other will be discovered, and his wickedness shewed, to his shame and confusion, before the whole congregation; and nothing will do more to make a man odious to all companions. Love (saith one) is the best armour, but the worst cloke, and will serve dissemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on and perished in.

27. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone it will return upon him.

See here, 1. What pains men take to do mischief to others: as they put a force upon themselves by concealing it with a profession of friendship, to they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it about; it is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work; and yet men will not stick at it to gratify their passion and revenge.

2. What preparation they hereby make of mischief to themselves; their violent dealing will return upon their own heads; they shall themselves fall into the pit they digged, and the stone they rolled will return upon them, *Psalm vii. 15, 16. ix. 15, 16.* The righteous God will take the wise, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. Haman is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing: *Nec lex est justior ulla quam neis artifices arte perire sua.*

28. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable.

1. A slanderous lie, which avowedly hates those that is spoken of. A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it: therefore afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches, because it hates them, and can thus smite them

secretly where they are without defence; and therefore hates them, because it has afflicted them, and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and every body sees it.

2. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former, the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises, and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills, than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

C H A P. XXVII.

1. **B**OAST not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Here is, 1. A good caution against presuming upon time to come. Boast not thyself, no, not of to-morrow, much less of many days or years to come. This doth not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon to-morrow; we must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God, and as those that with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not take thought for the morrow, *Matth. vi. 34.* but we must cast our care concerning it upon God. See *James iv. 13, 14, 15.* We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, as if we were sure of it, but to-day, while it is called to-day, hear God's voice.

2. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded; we know not what a day may bring forth; not what event may be in the teeming womb of time; it is secret till it is born, *Eccles. xi. 5.* A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of; we know not what the present day may bring forth, the evening must commend it, *Nescis quid serus vespere veniat.* God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself, and a continued readiness for every event, *Acts. i. 7.*

2. Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note, 1. We must do that which is commendable, for which even strangers may praise us. Our light must shine before men, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even in the gates, *Phil. iv. 8.*

2. When he have done it, we must not commend ourselves, for that is an evidence of pride, and folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation: Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but it doth not become us to applaud ourselves. *Proprio laus sordet in ere.*

3. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty: but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. 4. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

These two verses shew the intolerable mischief,

1. Of an ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, that when he is provoked, cares not what he saith and doth, is more grievous than a great stone or a load of sand. It lies heavy upon himself: those that have no command of their passions, do themselves ever sink under the load of them. It lies heavy upon those he is enraged at, whom in his fury he will be in danger of doing some mischief or other to. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but if he be in a passion to get out of his way.

2. Of a rooted malice; which is as much worse than the former, as coals of juniper are than a fire of thorns. Wrath (it is true) is cruel, and doth many a barbarous thing, and anger is outrageous, but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, is much more mischievous; one may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy; there is no standing before it; it will pursue, it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another, will be still contriving to do him hurt, and keep his anger for ever.

5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Note, 1. It is good for us to be reproved and told of our faults by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to shew itself in dealing plainly with our friends, and reproving them for what they say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret hatred, as *Lev. xix. 17.* but than secret love; that love to our neighbours which doth not shew itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice in their souls. Faithful are the reproofs of a friend, though for the present they are painful as wounds. It is a sign our friends are faithful indeed, if in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to cure the patient's disease, not to please his palate.

2. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy whose kisses are deceitful; we can take no pleasure in them, because we can put out no confidence in them. Joab's kiss and Judah's were deceitful, and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them; they are to be deprecated: So some read it; *The Lord deliver us from an enemy's kisses; from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*

7. The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Solomon here, as often in this book, shews, that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for,

1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have; hunger is the best sauce: Coarse fare with a good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it which they are strangers to whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting. They that fare sumptuously every day, nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas they that have no more but their necessary food, though it be such as the full soul would call

call bitter, to them it is *sweet*; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments. *The hungry will bless God for bread and water, while he that is full, thanketh him for the greatest dainties and varieties of food.* The Virgin Mary seems to refer to this, when she saith, *Luke i. 53.* *that the hungry, who know how to value God's blessings, are filled with good things, but the rich, that despise them, are justly sent empty away.*

8. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

Note, 1. There are many that do not know when they are well, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change. God, in his providence, hath appointed them a place fit for them, and has made it comfortable to them, but they affect unsettledness, they love to wander, they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place, they needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them.

2. Those that thus desert the post assigned to them, are like a bird that wanders from her nest; it is an instance of their folly; they are like a silly bird, they are always wandering like the wandering bird that hops from bough to bough, and rests nowhere. It is unsafe; the bird that wanders is exposed; a man's place is his castle, he that quits it makes himself an easy prey to the fowler; when the bird wanders from her nest, the eggs and young ones there are neglected. They that love to be abroad, leave their work at home undone. *Let every man therefore in the calling wherein he is called therein abide, therein abide with God.*

9. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. 10. Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity, for better is a neighbour that is near, than a brother far off.

Here is, 1. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends, to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the good offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom friend, whom we can be free with, and with whom we may communicate counsels; it is not necessary that this friend should be a relation, or any way akin to us; though it is happy, when, among those that are so, we find one fit to make a friend of. Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John: yet Solo- on frequently distinguished between a friend and a brother: But it is advisable to choose a friend among our neighbours that live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up, and kindnesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have special respect to those who have been friends to our family: *Thine own friend*, especially if he have been *thy father's friend forsake not*; fail not both to serve him, and to use him as there is occasion: He is a tried friend, he knows thine affairs, he has a particular concern for thee, therefore be advised by him. It is a duty we owe to our parents, when they are gone, to love their friends, and consult with them. Solomon's son undid himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends.

2. A good reason given why we should thus value true friendship, and be choice of it.

(1.) Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of *sweetness* in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend, it is like *ointment and perfume*, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirit; it *rejoiceth the heart*, the burden of care is made lighter by unboasting ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. *The sweetness of friendship* lies not in hearty mirth and hearty laughter, but in *hearty counsel*, faithful advice sincerely given and without flattery; *by counsel of the soul*, so the word is; counsel which reacheth the case, and comes to the heart; counsel about soul-concerns, (*Ps. lxxvi. 16.*) We should reckon that the most pleasant conversation which is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul.

(2.) Because of the profit and advantage of it, especially in a *day of calamity*; when we are advised not to go into a *brother's house*, nor to expect relief from a kinsman, merely for kindred sake, for the obligation of that commonly goes little farther than calling cousin, and fails when it comes to the trial of a real kindness; but rather to apply ourselves to our neighbours, that are at hand, and will be ready to help us at an exigence: It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, *Prov. xviii. 24.*

11. My son be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good,

1. That they may be a comfort to their parents, and may *make their hearts glad*, even when *the evil days come*, and so recompense them for their care, *chap. xxiii. 15.*

2. That they may be a credit to them: *That I may answer him that reproacheth me*, with having been over strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them, in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take: *My son, be wise*, and then it will appear in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children. Those that have been blest with a religious education, should carry it so in every thing as to be a credit to their education, and to silence those who say, A young saint, an old devil; and to prove the contrary, A young saint, an old angel.

12. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

This we had before, *chap. xxii. 3.*

Note, 1. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation, it is easy to foresee, that if we thrust ourselves into it, there will be sin, and as easy to foresee, that if we venture upon the evil of sin, there will follow the evil of punishment; and commonly God warns before he wounds, having *set watchmen over us*, *Jer. vi. 17.*

2. It will be well or ill with us, accordingly as we do or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us. The prudent man *foreseeing the evil*, forecasts accordingly, and *hideth himself*, but the simple is either so dull that he doth not foresee it, or so wilful and slothful that he will take no care to avoid it; and so he *passeth on securely, and is punished*. We do well for ourselves when we provide for hereafter.

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13. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

This also we had before, *chap. xx. 16.*

1. It shews who they are that are hastening to poverty; those that have so little confidence on as to be bound for every body that will ask them, and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up no eyes as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat the creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not that makes himself one.

2. It adviseth us to be so discreet in ordering our affairs, as not to lend money to those who are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is injustice to our families. He doth not say, get another to be bound with him; for he that makes himself a common vouchor, will have those to be his security that are as insolvent as himself; therefore *take his garment*.

14. He that blesteth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Note, 1. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors; it is our own duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those that excel in knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindnesses we have received with thankfulness; but to do this *with a loud voice, rising early in the morning*, to be always harping on this string in all companies, even to our friend's face, or so as that he may be tired to hear it, to do it continually, as we do that which we rise early to, to magnify the merits of our friend above measure and with hyperboes, is foolish and tedious, and favours of hypocrisy and design; praising men for what they have done, is only to get more out of them; and every body concludes the praise will be well paid for his panegyric or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend which is due to God only, as some think is intimated in *rising early to do it*; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not *make too much haste to praise men*, so as we understand it; nor cry up men too soon for their abilities and performances, but let them first be proved: lest they be lifted up with pride, and aid to sleep in idleness.

2. It is a greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised; a wife man rather than to sit *a curse*, and a reflection upon him; no one is designed to tick his pocket, but which may really turn to his prejudice. Modest praise (as a great man deserves) invite such as are present to add to the commendation, but immodest, immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather. Over-praising a man makes him the object of envy; every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckens himself injured if another monopolizes it, or has more given him than his share. And the most danger of all is, that it is a temptation to pride: men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet, when others speak of men above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, *2 Cor. xii. 6.*

15. A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike. 16. Whosoever hideth her, hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish, passionate wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself and a labyrinth for us.

1. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like a *continual dropping in a very rainy day*. The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp flower, trouble come for the time, yet while it lasts, one may take shelter; but the *contention of a wife* is like a constant, soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience. See *chap. x. 13.*

2. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wife man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation, but he cannot, no more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows, or the smell of a strong perfume. Those that are forward and brawling will proclaim their own shame, even when their friends in kindness to them would cover it.

17. Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

This speaks both the pleasure and the advantage of conversation: One man is no body; nor will per- ring upon a book in a corner accomplish a man so as reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpens men's wits; and those that have never so much knowledge, may by confidence have something added to them. It sharpens men's looks, and by cheering the spirits, puts a briskness and liveliness into the countenance, and gives a man such an air as shews he is pleased himself, and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like, especially by the fire: Men are fiered, i. e. made smooth and bright and fit for business, who were rough and dull and unactive, by conversation. This is designed,

1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to take heed who we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great, either for the better or for the worse.

2. To direct us what we must have in our eye in conversation, viz. to improve both others and ourselves, not to pass away time, or to banter one another, but to *provoke one another to love and to good works*, and so to make one another wiser and better.

18. Whoso keepeth the fig-tree, shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments: Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who stick to it will find there is something to be got by it.

1. Let not a poor gardener, that keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged, though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and when they are grown to maturity to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, yet he shall be paid for his pains, he shall eat the fruit of it, *1 Cor. ix. 7.*

2. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thivings and being preferred, for if he be diligent in *waiting on his master*, observant of him, and obedient to him: if *he keep his master*, so the word is; if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation, and take care his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one *shall be honoured*; shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a Master who hath engaged to put an honour on those that serve him faithfully, *John xii. 20.*

19. As in water face answereth to face: so the heart of man to man.

This shews us that there is a way,

1. Of knowing ourselves; as the water is a looking-glass in which we may see our faces by reflection, so there are mirrors by which the heart of man is discovered to a man, i. e. to himself. Let a man examine his own conscience, his thoughts, affections, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in a glance of the divine law, *Jam. i. 23.* and he may discern what kind of man he is, and what is his true character, which it will be of great use to every man rightly to know.

2. Of knowing one another by ourselves; for as there is a similitude between the face of a man and the reflection of it in the water, so there is between one man's heart and another's; for God has fashioned men's hearts alike; and in many cases we may judge of others by ourselves, which is one of the foundations on which that rule is built, of doing to others as we would be done by, *Exod. xxiii. 9.* *Nihil est unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes inter se invicem ipsos sumus. Nemo ipse tam similis omni sunt omnium. Cic. de Legib. lib. 1.* One corrupt heart is like another, and so is one sanctified heart, for the former bears the same image of the earthly, the latter the same image of the heavenly.

20. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin, death and sin.

1. Death is insatiable; the first death, the second death, both are so. The grave is full of a multitude of dead bodies that are daily thrown into it, but is still an open sepulchre, and cries, *Give, give*; hell also has enlarged itself, and still has room for the damned spirits that are committed to that prison: *Tophet is deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.*

2. Sin is insatiable. *The eyes of men are never satisfied*, nor the appetites of the carnal mind towards pain or pleasure, *the eye is not satisfied with seeing*, nor is he that *joyneth silver satisfied with silver*. Men labour for that which forfeits, but satisfieth not; nay, it is distasteful; such a perpetual uneasiness have men justly been doomed to, ever since our first parents were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden, but they must meddle with the forbidden tree. Those whose eyes are ever towards the Lord in him are satisfied, and shall for ever be so.

21. As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

This gives us a touch-stone by which we may try ourselves: silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot, so is a man tried by praising him. Let him be extolled and preferred, and then he will shew himself what he is.

1. If a man be made by the applause that is given him, proud and conceited and scornful, if he take the glory to himself which he should transmit to God, as Herod did; if the more he is praised, the more careless is he of what he saith and doth, if he *lie in bed till noon*, because *his name is up*, thereby it will appear that he is a vain and foolish man, and a man that, though he be praised, has nothing in him truly praise worthy.

2. If, on the contrary, a man is made by his praise more thankful to God, more respectful to his friends, more watchful against every thing that may blemish his reputation, more diligent to improve himself, and do good to others, that he may answer the expectations of his friends from him, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man. He has a good temper of mind that knows how to pass by evil report and good report, and is still the same, *2 Cor. vi. 8.*

22. Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar amongst wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Solomon said, *chap. xxii. 15.* that the foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child may be driven out by the rod of correction, &c. then the mind is to be moulded, and the vicious habits have not taken root; but here he shews, that if it be not done then, it will be next to impossible to do it afterwards; if the disease be inveterate, there is danger of its being incurable: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin?* Observe,

1. Some are so bad that rough and severe methods must be used with them, after gentle means have been tried in vain; they must be brayed in a mortar. God will take this way with them by his judgments; the magistrates must take this way with them by the rigour of the law. Force must be used on those that will not be ruled by reason, and love their own interest.

2. Some are so incorrigibly bad, that even these rough and severe methods do not answer the end, their *foolishness will not depart from them*: so fully are their hearts set in them to do evil; they are often under the rod, and not yet humbled; in the furnace, and yet not refined; but like Ahaz trespass yet more, *2 Chron. xxviii. 22.* and what remains then, but that they should be rejected as probate silver?

23. Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. 24. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? 25. The hay appeareth, and tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. 26. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for maintenance for thy maidens.

Here is, 1. A command given us to be diligent in our callings; it is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle; but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings; whatever our business is

within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates, (1.) That we ought to have time business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness. (2.) We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand. (3.) We ought to have an eye to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others: we should with our own eyes, inspect the *state of our flocks*, it is the master's eyes that make them fat. (4.) We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business; *know the state of things*, and *look well* to them, that nothing may be lost, and no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. (5.) We must be diligent, and *take pains*; not only sit down and contrive, but up and be doing; set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care; lay thy hands, lay thy bones to thy business.

2. The reasons to enforce this command. Consider,

1. The uncertainty of worldly wealth, *ver. 24. Riches are not for ever*, i. e. (1.) Other riches are not so durable as these are; *look well to thy flocks and herds*, thine estates in the country, and the flock upon that, for these are staple commodities, which, in a succession, will be for ever; whereas riches in trade and merchandize will not be so; the crown itself may perhaps not be so sure to thy family, as thy flocks and herds. (2.) Even these riches will go to decay, if they be not well looked after. If a man had an *abbey* (as we say) and be slothful and wasteful, he may make an end of it; even the crown and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer damage, nor will it *continue to every generation*, without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he *looked well to his flocks*, *1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31.*

2. The bounty and liberality of nature, or rather, of the God of nature and his providence, *ver. 25. The hay appears*. In taking care of the flocks and herds, (1.) There needs no great labour, no ploughing or sowing, the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground, thou hast nothing to do but turn them into it in the summer, *when the grass, herbs, &c. itself*, and to gather the herbs of the mountains for them again winter. God has done his part, thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly grateful to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine. (2.) There is an opportunity to be observed and improved; a time when the hay appears; but if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for ourselves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the ant, to provide meat in summer.

3. The profit of good husbandry in a family: *Keep thy sheep, and thy she-goats will help to keep thee*: thou shalt have food for thy children and servants: *Goats' milk enough*, *ver. 27.* and *enough is as good as a feast*. Thou shalt have raiment likewise, the lambs' wool shall be for thy clothing: Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent, the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be *the price of thy field*: nay, as some understand it, *Thou shalt become a purchaser*, and buy land to leave to thy children, *ver. 26.* Note, 1. If we have food and raiment, and wherewithal to give every body their own, we have enough, and ought to be not only content but thankful. 2. Masters of families must provide not only for themselves, but for their families, and see that their servants have a fitting maintenance. 3. Plain food and plain clothing, if it be but competent, is all we should aim at. Reckon thyself well done to if thou be clothed with home-spun cloth, with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goats' milk, let that serve for thy food which serves for the food of thy household, and the maintenance of thy maidens: be not desirous of dainties, *far fetched and dear bought*. 4. This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families: we shall *eat the labour of our hands*.

C H A P. XXVIII.

1. THE wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

See here, 1. What continued frights they are subject to that go on in wicked ways; guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to flee when none pursues; like one that absconds to debt, who thinks every one he meets a bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, *Psal. liii. 5.* They that have made God their enemy and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence, no courage, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Sin makes men cowards.

Degeneres animos timor arguit. VIRG.

Quos diri consilia facti mens habet attentos. JUV.

If they flee when none pursues, what will they do when they shall see God himself pursuing them with his armies? *Job. xx. 24.—xv. 24.* See *Deut. xxviii. 25.* *Lev. xxvi. 30.*

2. What a holy security and serenity of mind they enjoy that keep conscience void of offence, and so keep themselves in the love of God. The righteous are bold as a lion, as a young lion; in the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to, therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed; whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them; *none of these things move me.*

Ille murus athenicus esto, nil conspire sibi. HOR.

2. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

Note, 1. National sins bring national disorders, and the disturbances of the public repose: for the transgression of a land, and a general defection from God and religion, to idolatry, profaneness, or immorality, many are the princes thereof, many at the same time pretending to the sovereignty and contending for it, by which the people are crumbled into parties and factions, biting and devouring one another. Or many successively, in a little time, one cutting off another, as *1 Kings xvi. 8, &c.* or soon cut off by the hand of God, or of a foreign enemy, as *2 Kings xxiv. 5, &c.* A. the people suffer for the sins of the prince,

Delirant reges, placentur Achivi;

so the government sometimes suffers for the sins of the people.

2. Wisdom will prevent or redress these grievances: by a man, i. e. by a people of understanding, that come again to themselves and their right mind, things are kept in a good order, or if disturbed, brought back to the old channel again. Or by a prince of understanding and knowledge, a privy-counsellor or minister of state, that will restrain or suppress the transgression

griffion of the land, and take the right method of healing the state the cost of the good estate of it will be prolonged. We cannot imagine what a great deal of service one wise man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.

3. A poor man that oppresseth the poor, is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

See here, 1. How hard-hearted poor people are many times to one another; not only not doing such good offices as they might do one to another, but imposing upon and over-reaching one another. Those that know by experience the miseries of poverty, should be compassionate to those who suffer the like, but are inexorably barbarous if they be injurious to them.

2. How imperious and griping those commonly are that, being indigent and necessitous get into power: If a Prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that ever he was poor, and none shall be so oppressive to the poor as he, nor squeeze them so cruelly. The hungry leech and the dry sponge suck milk: *See a beggar on horseback and he will ride without mercy; he is like a sweeping rain which washeth away the corn in the ground, and lays and beats out that which is grown, so that it leaves no food.* Princes therefore ought not to put those into places of trust who are poor and in debt, and be hind-hand in the world; nor any that make it their main business to enrich themselves.

4. They that forsake the law, praise the wicked: but such as keep the law, contend with them.

Note, 1. Those that *praise the wicked*, make it to appear that they do themselves *forsake the law* and go contrary to it, for that curseth and condemneth the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hand in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences, and to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, which is not done by any thing so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

2. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves, will, in their places, vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it; they will reprove the works of darkness, and silence the execrations which are made for those works, and do what they can to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

Note, 1. As the prevalency of men's lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts. *Men understand not judgment*, discern not between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty, or of their doom; and, (1.) Therefore it is that *they are evil men*, their wickedness is the effect of their ignorance and error, *Eph. iv. 18.* (2.) Therefore they *understand not judgment*, because they are *evil men*, their corruption blinds their eyes, and fills them with prejudices, and because they do evil they *hate the light*. It is just with God also to give them up to strong delusions.

2. As men's seeking the Lord is a good sign that they do understand much, so it is a good means of their understanding more, even of their understanding all things needful for them. They that see God's glory before them as their end, his favour as their felicity, and his word as their rule, and apply themselves to him upon all occasions by prayer, *they seek the Lord*, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man *do his will* he shall know his doctrine, *John vii. 17.* A good understanding they have, and a better they shall have that do his commandments, *Psal. cxi. 10. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 15.*

6. Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Here, 1. It is supposed that a man may walk in his uprightness, and yet be poor in this world, may be poor in the world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation, and continue to walk in his uprightness. Also that a man may be *perverse in his ways*, injurious to God and men, and yet be rich and prosper in the world for a while; may be rich, and so lie under great obligations, and have great opportunities to do good, and yet be *perverse in his ways*, and do a great deal of hurt.

2. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world, that an honest godly poor man is better than a wicked ungodly rich man; has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, and is a greater blessing to the world, and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but it is better in life. When Aristides was by a rich man upbraided with his poverty, he answered, *Thy riches doth thee more hurt than my poverty doth me.*

7. Whofo keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father.

Note, 1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously keepeth the law is wise, and he will be particularly a wise son, i. e. will carry it discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teacheth him to do so.

2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those that are companions of riotous men, that choose such for their companions, and delight in their conversation, they will certainly be drawn from keeping the laws of God, and drawn to transgress it, *Psal. cxix. 115.*

3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are a-kin to him; he that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, he not only grieves his parents, but shames them, it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

8. He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, 1. That which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps raise a great estate in a little time by usury

and extortion, fraud and oppression of the poor, but it will not continue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it.

2. Sometimes God in his providence orders it, that that which one got unjustly, another useth charitably; it is strangely turned into the hands of one that will pity the poor, and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it, that got it by deceit and violence. Thus the same providence that banisheth the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. *Thou that hast the ten thou dost give the reward which the wicked servant had in his rapine, for to him that has, and useth it well, more shall be gotten, Luke xix. 24.* Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Note, 1. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him and heed him; we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be whenever we are hearing from and speaking to the Lord of glory!

2. If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him; not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonies and appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight. *See Mat. i. 11.* The sinner, whose prayer God is thus angry at, is one who wilfully and obstinately refuseth to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causeth his ear to deafen the law, when God calls, God will justly refuse him when he calls. *See Prov. i. 24—25.*

10. Whofo causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

Here is, 1. The doom of seducers that attempt to draw good people, or those who profess to be such, into sin and mischief; that would wear pride in *causing the righteous to go astray in an evil way*. In drawing them into a snare, that they may insult over them, they shall not gain their point; it is impossible to deceive the elect, but they shall fall themselves into their own pit; and having been not only sinners but tempters, not only unrepentant, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, *Matth. xxiii. 13, 15.*

2. The happiness of the sincere: they shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into, but they shall have good things, the best things in possession, the graces and comforts of God's spirit, besides what they have in reversion.

11. The rich man is wise in his own conceit: but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Note, 1. Those that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and they that are pride-proud expect all they say should be regarded as an oracle and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them, but every sneer, bow to their's; this humour is fed by flatterers, who, because like Jezebel's prophets, they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

2. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they. A poor man who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to get a reputation, he *searcheth him out*, and makes it to appear he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenseth his gifts, to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom, and it is easy to say which of these is the best gift, which we should covet most earnestly.

12. When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory; but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, 1. The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live. There is a great glory dwelling in the land when the righteous do rejoice, i. e. when they have their liberty, the free exercises of their religion, and are not persecuted, when the government countenanceth them and speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich, and much more when they are preferred and employed, and have power put into their hands.

2. The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation: When the wicked rise and get head, they make head against all that is sacred, and then a man is hidden, a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety: corruptions prevail so generally, that as in Elisha's time there seem to be no good men left, the wicked walk so thick on every side.

13. He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whofo confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Here is, 1. The folly of indulging sin, of palating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, dimming it, or flinching it, or throwing the blame of it upon others; he that thus covereth his sins shall not prosper, let him never expect it: he shall not succeed in his endeavours to cover his sin, for it shall be discovered sooner or later, *there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed*, a bird of the air shall carry the voice, murder will out, and so will other sins; he shall not prosper, i. e. he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience: David owns himself in a constant toils while he covered his sin, *Psal. xxxix. 3, 4.* While the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure.

2. The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession and an universal reformation: He that confesseth his guilt to God, and is careful not to return to sin again, he shall find mercy with God, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased and his ruin prevented. *See 1 John i. 9. Jer. li. 12, 13.* When we set sin before our face (as David, *my sin is ever before me*) God casts it behind his back.

14. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Here

Here is, 1. The benefit of a holy caution. It sounds strange, but it is very true: *Happy is the man that feareth alway*. Most people think, happy they that never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it, that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man that always keeps up in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness and government; that is always afraid of offending God; and incurring his displeasure, that keeps conscience tender, and has a dread of the appearance of evil, that is always jealous of himself, and distrustful of his own sufficiency, and lives in expectation of troubles and changes, so that when ever they come they are no surprise to him. He that keeps up such a fear as this will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore *happy is he*, blessed and holy.

2. The danger of a sinful presumption. *He that hardeneth his heart*, that mocketh at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, he *shall fall into mischief*, his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into, it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15. *As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.*

It is written indeed, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*; but if he be a wicked ruler that oppresseth the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have, and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him *a roaring lion, and a ranging bear*.

1. In respect of his character, he is brutish and barbarous and blood-thirsty, he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason and humanity.

2. In respect of the mischief they do to their subjects, they are dreadful as the *roaring lion*, who makes the forest tremble; they are devouring as a hungry *bear*, and the more necessitous they are the more mischief they do, and the more greedy of gain they are.

16. *The prince that wanteth understanding, is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.*

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the mal-administration of princes.

1. The love of money, that root of all evil; for *hating covetousness* here stands opposed to *oppression*, according to Moses's character of good magistrates, *not fearing God and hating covetousness*, Exod. xviii. 21. Not only not being covetous, but *hating* it, and shaking the hands from holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly, nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold.

2. Want of consideration. *He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace*, shall be happy in the affections of his people, and the blessings of his God. It is as much the interest as duty of princes to reign in righteousness; oppressors therefore and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world; they *want understanding*, they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects, than in their necks or estates.

17. *A man that doth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.*

This agrees with that ancient law, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. ix. 6. and speaks,

1. The doom of the shedder of blood. He that has committed murder, though he flies for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself *flee to the pit*, betray himself, and torment himself like Cain, who, when he had killed his brother, became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually.

2. The duty of the avenger of blood, whether the magistrate, or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. They that acquit the murderer, or do any thing to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood; nor can the land be purged from blood but by the blood of him that shed it, Numb. xxxv. 33.

18. *Who so walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.*

Note, 1. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye in every thing at the glory of God and the good of his brethren; that would not, for a world, do any unjust thing if he knew it; that in all manner of conversation *walks uprightly*, he *shall be saved* hereafter. We find a glorious company of those in whose mouth was found no guile, Rev. xiv. 5. they shall be safe now: integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests; they may be injured, they cannot be hurt.

2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe. *He that is perverse in his ways*, that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill got, he *shall fall*, nay, he *shall fall at once*, not gradually and with warning given, but suddenly without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. He *falls at once*, and so has neither time to guard against his ruin, nor to provide for it; and being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.

19. *He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*

Note, 1. Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably; he that *tilles his land*, and tends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is, he *shall have plenty of bread*, of that which is necessary for himself and his family, and with which he may be charitable to the poor; he *shall eat the labour of his hands*.

2. Those that are idle, and careless, and company-keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. He that hath land, and values himself upon that, but doth not till it, neglects his business, will not take pains, but *follows after vain persons*, drinks with them, joins with them in their frolics

and vain sports, and idles away his time with them, he shall have *poverty enough*, shall be *satiated* or *replenished* with poverty, so the word is; he takes those courses which lead so directly to it, that he seems to court it, and he shall have his belly full of it.

20. *A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.*

Here, 1. We are directed in the true way to be happy and that is to be holy and honest; he that is *faithful* to God and man, shall be blessed of the Lord, and he *shall abound with blessings* of the upper and the nether-springs: men shall praise him and pray for him, and be ready to do him any kindness: he shall abound in doing good, and shall himself be a blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good reward.

2. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate presently; say not, that is the way to *abound with blessings*, for *he that maketh haste to be rich*, more haste than good speed, he *shall not be innocent*; and if he be not, he shall not be blessed of God, but rather bring a curse upon what he has; nor if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to himself: he shall not be accounted innocent by his neighbours, but shall have their ill will and ill word. He doth not say he *cannot be innocent*; but there is all the probability in the world he will not prove so; *he that hasteth with his feet sinneth*, stumbleth, falleth. *Sed quæ reverentia legum? Quis metus aut pudor est unquam operantis avari?*

21. *To have respect to persons is not good: for, for a piece of bread that man will transgress.*

Note, 1. It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression, to consider the parties concerned, more than the merits of the cause, so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party and persuasion; and to bear hard upon the other party, because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn, is or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me: judgment is perverted when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right.

2. Those that are partial will be paltry, that have once broke through the bonds of equity, though at first it must be some great bribe, some noble present that would bias them, yet when they have debauched their consciences, they will at length be so wretched, that for a piece of bread they will give judgment against their consciences; they will rather play at small game than sit out.

22. *He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.*

Here again Solomon shews the sin and folly of those that will be rich; they are resolved they will be so, *per fas, per nefas*; they will be so with all speed, they are riding tawdry into an estate.

1. They have no comfort in it: they *have an evil eye*, i. e. they are always grieving at those that have more than they, and always grudging their necessary expences, because they think the former keeps them from seeming rich, the latter from being so, and between both they must needs be perpetually uneasy.

2. They have no assurance of the continuance of it, and yet take no thought to provide against the loss of it. *Poverty shall come upon them*, and the riches which they made wings for that they might fly to them, will make themselves wings to fly from them; but they are secure and provident, and do not consider this, that while they are making *haste to be rich*, they are really making haste to be poor, else they would not *trust to uncertain riches*.

23. *He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

Note, 1. Flatterers may please these for a time, who, upon second thoughts, will desert and despise them: If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of that pride and vanity which was humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers, as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries, as having had an ill effect upon them, and being become nauseous.

2. Reprovers may displease those at first, who yet afterwards, when the passion is over, and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have said words instead of thanks for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort of his own bosom of having done his duty, but he whom he reproveth also will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will conceive an opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound, yet will pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.

24. *Who so robbeth his father, or his mother, and faith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.*

As Christ shews the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents, *Mat. xv. 5*. so Solomon here shews the absurdity and wickedness of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force, or secretly; by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them) running into debt, and leaving them to pay it. Now,

1. This is commonly made light of by untoward children; they say, *It is no transgression*, for it will be their own shortly, their parents can well enough spare it, they have occasion for it, they cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance their parents give them, which they complain of as too strait: with such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction: But,

2. How light soever an ungoverned youth makes of it, it is really a very great sin; he that doth it *is the companion of a destroyer*; no better than a robber

robber on the highway. What wickedness will he stick at, that will rob his own parents?

25. He that is of a proud heart, stirreth up strife; but he that putteth his trust in the LORD, shall be made fat.

Note, 1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that *shall be made fat*. He that is of a proud heart, that is conceited of himself, and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he *stirs up strife*, makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and every body else.

2. Those make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace; he that *putteth his trust in the Lord*, that, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, he *shall be made fat*; he saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness, he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God; and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those that live by faith.

26. He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool: but who so walketh wisely he shall be delivered.

Here is, 1. The character of a fool, he *trusts to his own heart*, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency; his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he hath of himself; he that doth so is a fool, for he trusts to that not only which is *deceitful above all things*, Jer. xvii. 9. but which has many a time deceived him. This implies, that it is the character of a wise man, as before, ver. 25. to *put his trust in the Lord*, and in his power and promise, and to follow his conduct, Prov. iii. 5, 6.

2. The comfort of a wise man. He that *walks wisely*, that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, he *shall be delivered*; when the fool that *trusts in his own heart*, shall be destroyed.

27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse.

Here is, 1. A promise to be charitable: he that *gives to the poor*, shall himself be never the poorer for so doing, he *shall not lack*; if he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing; as the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah, for whom she made a little cake first, when what she had was reduced to an handful of meal. If he have much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its growing less; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity: What we gave, we have.

2. A threatening to the uncharitable: He that *hideth his eyes*, that he may not see the miseries of the poor, nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart, and extort some relief from him, he *shall have many a curse*, both from God and man, and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woeful is the condition of that man, that has the word of God and the prayers of the poor against him.

28. When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purpose with what we had, ver. 14.

1. When ill men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, men *hide themselves*, wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abandon, despairing to do good, and fearing to be persecuted and ill treated.

2. When ill men are displaced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again; then the *righteous increase*; for when they *perish*, good men will be put in their room, that will by their example and interest countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increaseth in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them, and to take special care of the good education of youth.

CHAP. XXIX.

1. HE that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, 1. The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are *often reprov'd* by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God, and by their own consciences, have had their sins set in order before them, and fair warning given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain, they *harden their necks*, perhaps they fling away, and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing; or if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reprov'd, they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial, they refuse reproof, Prov. x. 17. despise it, Prov. v. 12. hate it, Prov. xii. 1.

2. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded. They that go on in sin, in despite of admonition, they *shall be destroyed*; those that will not be reformed, must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes; they *shall be suddenly destroyed*, in the midst of their security, and without remedy; they have sinned against the preventing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction; they *shall be destroyed, and no healing*, so the word is: If God wounds, who can heal?

2. When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, chap. xxviii. 12—28.

1. The people will have cause to rejoice or mourn, according as their rulers are righteous or wicked; for if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished. Vol. II. No. CII.

nished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported, and kept in reputation; but if the wicked get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be persecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.

2. The people will rejoice or mourn, according as their rulers are righteous or wicked: Such a conviction are even the common people under of the excellency of virtue and religion, that they will rejoice when they see it preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have never so much honour and power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they *make themselves contemptible and base before all the people*, as those priests, Mal. ii. 9. and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.

3. Who so loveth wisdom, rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots, spendeth his substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what hath been often said, but comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other.

1. Be it observed to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he *loves wisdom*, he is a philosopher, (for that signifies a lover of wisdom) for religion is the best philosophy; he avoids ill company, and especially the company of lewd women; hereby he *rejoiceth his parents*, and hath the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increaseth his estate, and is like to live comfortably.

2. Be it observed to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he *hates wisdom*, he keeps company with scandalous women, that will be his ruin both soul and body; he grieves his parents, and like the prodigal son, devours their living with harlots. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness; and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4. The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts, overthroweth it.

Here is, 1. The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to *establish the land*, to maintain its fundamental laws, to settle the minds of his subjects, and make them easy, to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities, and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting; this he must do by judgment, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice without respect of persons, which will have these good effects.

2. The misery of people under a bad government. A man of oblations, so it is in the margin, *overthroweth the land*; a man that is either sacrilegious or superstitious, or invades the priest's office, as Saul and Uzziah; or a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will, for a good bribe, connive at the most guilty, and in hope of one, persecute the innocent; such governors as these will ruin a country.

5. A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to *flatter their neighbours*, who commend and applaud that good in them, the good they do, or the good they have, which really either is not, or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and affection for them, which really they have not, these *spread a net for their feet*.

1. For their neighbour's feet, whom they flatter; they have an ill design in it, they would not speak them thus fair, but that they hope to make a hand of them; and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and stand on our guard accordingly. Or it has an ill effect on those who are flattered, it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that intangles them in sin.

2. For their own feet, so some understand it. He that flatters others, in expectation they will return his compliments, and flatter him, doth but make himself ridiculous and odious even to those he flatters.

6. In the transgression of an evil man, there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, 1. The peril of a sinful way: there is not only a punishment at the end of it, but a snare in it, one sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which as a snare come suddenly upon evil men in the midst of their transgressions; nay, their transgression itself often involves them in vexations, their sin is their punishment, and they are *holden in the cords of their own iniquity*, Prov. v. 22.

2. The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is in the transgression of evil men spoils all their mirth, but righteous men are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them; they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they *sing and rejoice*; they that make God their chief joy, have him for their exceeding joy, and it is their own fault if they do not *rejoice evermore*. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless they have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7. The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

It is pity but that every one that sues, *sub forma pauperis*, should have an honest cause, (they are of all others inexcusable, if they have not) because the scripture has so well provided that it should have a fair hearing, and that the judge himself should be of council as for the prisoner, so for the pauper.

1. It is here made the character of a righteous judge, that he *considereth the cause of the poor*; it is every man's duty to consider the poor, Psalm xli. 1. but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment; they must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man's cause, as in a rich man's: Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man's cause, as if they hoped for the greatest advantage.

2. It is made the character of a wicked man, that because it is a poor man's cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he *regardeth not to know it*, in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong. See Job. xxix. 16.

8. Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

See here, 1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public, *scornful men*; when such are employed in the business of the state, they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word; provoke the people, because they scorn to please them; thus they *bring a city into a snare*, by their ill conduct, or, as the margin reads it, they *set a city on fire*, they sow discord among the citizens, and run them into confusion. These are *scornful men* that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, and the fears of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious; such men are the plagues of their generation, they bring God's judgments upon a land, fit men together by the ears, and bring all to confusion.

2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land; the *wise men*, who by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, *turn away the wrath of God*, and who by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties, and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9. If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is no rest*.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's, not to dispute with him, or by contending with him to think either of fastening reason upon him, or gaining right from him. If a wise man contend with a wise man, he may hope to be understood, and as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least to bring the controversy to a head, and issue it amicably; but if he contend with a foolish man, *there is no rest*; he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.

1. Whether the foolish man he contends with *rage or laugh*, whether he take heinously or take scornfully what is said to him, whether he rail at it or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be *no rest*. However it is given it will be taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed if he contend with a fool: He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be ill dirtied.

2. Whether the wise man himself *rage or laugh*, whether he takes the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool, whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod or with the *spirit of meekness*, (1 Cor. iv. 21.) it is all alike, no good is done. *We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*

10. The blood-thirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

Note, 1. All men hate their best friends. The blood-thirsty, all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, and inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, they hate the upright, they seek the ruin of good men, because they condemn the wicked world, and witness against it. Christ told his disciples, they should be *hated of all men*. Bloody men do especially hate upright magistrates, that would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness.

2. Good men love their worst enemies. The just, whom the bloody men hate, seek their soul, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us, *Father, forgive them. The just seek his soul*, i. e. the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate, so it is commonly understood; seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it, at the hands of the blood-thirsty.

11. A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Note, 1. It is a piece of weakness to be open. He is a fool that uttereth all his mind, that tells every thing he knows, and hath in his mouth presently whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel; that whatever is started in discourse, shoots his bolt presently; that when he is provoked will say any thing that comes uppermost, whoever is reflected upon by it; that when he is to speak of any business, will say all he thinks, and yet never thinks he saith enough, whether choice or refuse, corn or chaff, pertinent or impertinent, you shall have it all.

2. It is a piece of wisdom to be upon the reserve. A wise man will not utter all his mind presently, but will take time for a second thought, or reserve the present thought for a fitter time, when it will be more pertinent, and likely to answer his intention; will not deliver himself in a continued speech, or stretched discourse, but with pause, that he may hear what is to be objected, and answer it. *Non minus interdum oratorium est tacere quam dicere.* Plin. Ep. 7, 6.

12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

Note, 1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to *hearken to lies*, for the by they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give wrong informations: lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief.

2. Those that do so will have all their servants wicked; all their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them: all that have their ear, will fill their ear with flanders, and false characters and representations; and so if princes as well as people will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations, and giving countenance and ear to them.

13. The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

This shews how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence, by persons of very different tempers, capacities, and conditions in the world; even,

1. By those that are contrary the one to the other. Some are poor and forced to borrow, others are rich, have a great deal of the *manimon of unrighteousness*, deceitful riches they are called, and they are creditors, or *usurers*, as it is in the margin: Some are poor, and honest, and laborious; others rich, slothful, and deceitful, they meet together in the business of

this world, and have dealings with one another, and the Lord enlighteneth both their eyes, he causeth his sun to shine upon both, and gives them both the comforts of this life; to some of both sorts he gives his grace; he enlightens the eyes of the poor, by giving them patience, and of the deceitful; by giving them repentance, as Zacheus.

2. By those that we think could but be spared. The poor and the deceitful we are ready to look upon as blemishes of providence, but God makes even them to serve the beauty of providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving the poor always with us, but in permitting the deceitful and the deceiver, for both are his, Job xii. 10. and turn to his praise.

14. The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

Here is, 1. The duty of magistrates; and that is to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them according to truth and equity; particularly to take care of the poor; not to countenance them in an unjust cause for the sake of their poverty, *Exod. xxiii. 3.* but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice if they have a just cause. The rich will look to themselves, but the poor and needy the prince must defend, *Psal. lxxxii. 3.* and plead for, *Prov. xxxi. 9.*

2. The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty; their throne of honour, their tribunal of judgment, shall be established for ever. This will secure to them the favour of God, and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity, and perpetuate it in the family.

15. The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents in educating their children must consider,

1. The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil, but they must chide them and correct them too if need be, when they either neglect that which is good, or do that which is evil. If a reproof will serve without the rod it is well, but the rod must never be used without a rational and grave reproof; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet it will give wisdom. *Vixit ut intellectionem.* The child will take warning; and so will get wisdom.

2. The mischief of undue indulgence. A child that is not restrained or reproofed, but is left to himself, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, he may do well if he will, but if he take all courts no body will hinder him, it is a thousand to one he proves a disgrace to his family, and brings his mother, that fondled him and humoured him in his licentiousness, to shame, to poverty, to reproach, and perhaps will himself be abusive to her, and give her ill language.

16. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, 1. The more sinners there are, the more sin there is. When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side, no marvel if *transgression increaseth*; as a plague in the country is said to increase, when still more and more are infected with it. Transgression grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when men began to multiply, they began to degenerate, and corrupt themselves and one another.

2. The more sin there is, the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners; let them not say they have *cleansed their hands in vain*, or that *God has forsaken the earth*, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall, *Psal. xxxvii. 34.* perhaps, in this world, however in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints. See *Jsa. lxvi. 24. Gen. xix. 28.*

17. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, 1. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents; good children are so: they give them rest, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them; yea, they give delight unto their souls. It is a pleasure to parents, which none know but they that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds; it gives delight proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them.

2. In order to this children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will, and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts, must by correction be driven out when they are young, or it will break out to their own and their parents' shame when they are grown up.

18. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

See here, 1. The misery of the people that want a settled ministry. Where there is no vision, no prophets to expound the law, no priests or Levites to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is no open vision, *1 Sam. iii. 1.* where it is so, the people perish; the word has many significations which will any of them suit well enough; (1.) The people are made naked, stripped of their ornaments, and so exposed to shame; stripped of their armour, and so exposed to danger. How bare does a place look without bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls? (2.) The people rebel, not only against God, but against their prince; good preaching would make people good subjects, but for want of it they are turbulent and factious, and despise dominion, because they know no better. (3.) The people are idle, or they play, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent; they do nothing to any good purpose, but stand all the day idle, and sporting in the marketplace, for want of instruction what to do and how to do it. (4.) They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd, for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, *Mark vi. 34.* They are scattered from God and their duty by apostacies, from another by divisions; God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, *2 Chron. xv. 3-5.* (5.) They

They

They perish; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hof. iv. 6. See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of open wisdom which we enjoy!

2. The felicity of a people who has not only a settled but a successful ministry among them; the people that heareth and keepeth the law, among whom religion is uppermost, happy is that people, and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19. A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand, he will not answer.

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant; a slave, that serves not for conscience or love, but purely for fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation, and not disturb themselves at it. See their character:

1. No rational words will work upon them; they will not be corrected and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words; even the most gentle master will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable.

2. No rational words will be got from them; but they are dogged and sullen; and though they understand the questions you ask them, they will not give an answer; though you make it never so plain to them, what you expect from them, they will not promise you to mend what is amiss, nor to mind their business. See the folly of such servants, whose mouth, by their silence calleth for strokes; they might be corrected by words, and save blows, but they will not.

20. Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shews that there is little hopes of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty; either,

1. Through rashness and inconsideration. *Seest thou a man that is hasty in his matters?* that is, of a light, desultory wit, that seems to take a thing quick, but takes it by the halves, gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it, no time to pause or muse upon a business, *there is more hope of making a scholar, and a wise man, of one that is dull and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that has such a mercurial genius, and cannot fix.*

2. Through pride and conceitedness. *Seest thou a man that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it to open it, and speak last to it to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle? there is more hope of a modest fool, who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.*

21. He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length.

Note, 1. It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him; to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring up delicately, because he is a favourite, and a pretty servant; remember he is a servant, and by being thus indulged will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness.

2. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to carry himself insolently, because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant; and will be a son at the length, will take his estate and liberty, will be hail fellow with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, it will at length forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

22. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition.

1. It makes men provoking to one another. *An angry man stirreth up strife,* is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family, in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forceth those to fall out with him that would live peaceably and quietly by him.

2. It makes men provoking to God. *A furious man,* that is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but abound in transgressions; that is a sin that is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon God's name, but it occasions their swearing and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23. A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once,

1. That those who exalt themselves shall be abased. They that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and applauding themselves, will, on the contrary, expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God by humbling providences to bring them down and lay them low.

2. That those who humble themselves shall be exalted; and shall be established in their dignity. Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit; their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24. Who is partner with a thief, hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

See here what sin and ruin they involve themselves in, who are drawn away by the enticement of sinners.

1. They incur a great deal of guilt: He doth so that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them, *Prov. i. 11. &c.* the receiver is as bad as the thief: And being drawn in to join with him, in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and ex-

crations: They hear cursing, when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.

2. They hasten to utter ruin: They even hate their own souls, for they willfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of; they love death, than which nothing more dreadful, and hate their own souls, than which nothing more dear.

25. The fear of man bringeth a snare: but who putteth his trust in the LORD, shall be safe.

Here, 1. We are cautioned not to dread the power of a man; neither the power of a prince, nor the power of the multitude; both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare, i. e. exposeth men to many insults; some take a pride in terrifying the timorous; or rather expose men to many temptations: Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and many a one his God and religion. We must not baulk duty or commit sin to avoid the wrath of man, nor, though we see it coming upon us, be disquieted with fear, *Dan. iii. 16. Psalm cxviii. 6.* he must himself die, *Isa. li. 12.* and can but kill our body, *Luke xii. 5.*

2. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man which hath either torment or temptation in it. *Who putteth his trust in the Lord,* for protection and supply in the way of duty, he shall be set on high, above the power of man, and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. *If God be my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.*

26. Many seek the ruler's favour, but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.

See here, 1. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great: *They seek the ruler's favour,* and, as if all their judgment did proceed from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew with what sedulity men made their application to him, some on one errand, others on another, but all for his favour; it is the way of the world to make an interest with great men; and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them. Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler's favour, and yet cannot have it; many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it; by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure; many have it and keep it, and yet it doth not answer their expectation, they cannot make that hand of it they that promised themselves they should. *Haman had the ruler's favour,* and yet it availed him nothing.

2. What is the wiser course men take to be happy; let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord: It is not with us as the ruler will; his favour cannot make us happy, his frowns cannot make us miserable; but it is as God will; every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, so more and no other; he is the first cause on which all second causes depend; if he help not, they cannot, *2 Kings vi. 27. Job xxxiv. 29.*

27. An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way, is abomination to the wicked.

This speaks not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, *Gen. iii. 15.*

1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people; they have a good will to the souls of all. God hath so, and would have none perish, but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God, and injurious towards men, they cannot hear of them, or speak of them, without a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but would do all they could to bring the wickedness of the wickedness to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment, that good men cannot endure him.

2. All that are un sanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people. He that is upright in the way, that makes conscience of what he saith and doth, is an abomination to the wicked, whose wickedness is restrained perhaps and suppressed; or, however, shamed and condemned by the uprightness of the upright. Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom they shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, *Psalm xlix. 14.*

C H A P. XXX.

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophecies, in the first verses of both; by which it appears, that the penmen of them who ever they were, were divinely inspired. This chapter was penned by one that bears the name of Agur Ben Jakeb; what tribe he was of, or when he lived we are not told: What he wrote, being indited by the Holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here, 1. His confession of faith, ver. 1—6. 2. His prayer, ver. 7—9. 3. A caution against wronging servants, ver. 10. 4. Four wicked generations, ver. 11—14. 5. Four things insatiable, ver. 15, 16. to which is added, fair warning to undutiful children, ver. 17. 6. Four things unspeakable, ver. 18—20. 7. Four things intolerable, ver. 21—23. 8. Four things little and wise, ver. 24—29. 9. Four things stately, ver. 29. ad finem.

1. THE words of Agur the son of Jakeb, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal. 2. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. 3. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who

who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? 5. Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Some make Agur to be not the name of this author but his character; he was a collector, so it signifies; a gatherer; one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others; made abstracts of others' writings; which some think is the reason why he saith, *ver. 3. I have not learned wisdom myself, but have been a scribe or amanuensis to other wise and learned men.* Note, We must not bury our talent, though it be but one, but as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which no doubt was well known then, though not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Ithiel and *Ucal* are mentioned, either,

1. As the name of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably, they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, and they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or,

2. As the subject of his discourse. *Ithiel* signifies God with me, the application of *Immanuel, God with us.* The word calls him God with us; faith appropriates this, and calls him God with me, who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I was admitted. *Ucal* signifies the Mighty one, for it is upon one that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many good interpreters apply this therefore to the Messiah, for to him all the prophecies bear witness, and why not this then? It is what Agur saith concerning *Ithiel*, even concerning *Ithiel* (that is the name on which the stress is laid) and *Ucal.* The mighty God, *Isa. ix. 6. with us.* *Isa. vi. 14.*

Three things the prophet here aims at,

1. To abate himself. Before he makes confession of his faith, he makes confession of his folly, and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which makes it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Before he speaks concerning the Saviour, he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and nothing without him; we must go out of ourselves before we go into Jesus Christ.

1. He speaks of himself as wanting a *righteousness*, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself he owns, *Surely I am more brutish than any man. Every man is become brutish,* *Jer. x. 14.* But he that knows his own heart, knows so much more evil by himself than he doth by any other, that he cries out, *Surely I cannot but think that I am more brutish than any man,* sure no man has such a corrupt deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has not the understanding of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; nay, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I had not done as I have done. Agur, when he was applied to by others as wiser than most, acknowledged himself more foolish than any. Whatever high opinions others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

(2.) He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns, *ver. 3. I neither learned wisdom by any power of my own, the depths of it cannot be fathomed by line and plummet, nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones, the angels, our first parents in innocency, nor of the holy things of God, I can get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them further than God is pleased to make them known to me; the natural man, the natural powers perceive not, nay they receive not the things of the Spirit of God.* Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, *Who was the wisest man?* answered, *He that is sensible of his own ignorance, especially in divine things. Hoc tantum scio me nihil scire.*

2. To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him, *ver. 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, &c.*

(1.) Some understand this of God; and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challengeth all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth, who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand, and managed them as God doth, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a riddling band, as God has done? Who hath established the ends of the earth, or can defend the strength of its foundations or extent of its limits? Tell me what is the man's name, who can undertake to vie with God, or to be of his cabinet council, or if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret?

(2.) Others refer it to Christ, to *Ithiel* and *Ucal*, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name as well as the Father's that is here enquired after, and a challenge given to any to compare with him. We must now exalt Christ as one revealed, they then magnified him as one concealed; as one they had heard something of, but had very dark and defective ideas of; *We have heard the fame of him with our ears, but cannot describe him, Job xxviii. 22.* certainly it is God that has gathered the wind in his fists, and bound the waters as in a garment; but what is his name? It is, *I am that I am, Exod. iii. 14.* a name to be adored, not to be understood: What is his Son's name, by whom he doth all these things? the old testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the blessed, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled, nor found out to perfection. 1. The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparallelled; for who but he hath ascended into heaven and descended? Who but he is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was in heaven in the Father's bosom, *John i. 1. 18.* thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension? And in that nature he again ascended, *Eph. iv. 9.* to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who but he has done this? *Rom. x. 5. 2.* The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparallelled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both, and governs and disposes of all. The three lower elements of *air, water, and earth,* he here instanceth in his government of. (1.) The motions of the air are of his directing: Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, but even there *Carthago* has all power, he rebuked the winds and they obeyed him. (1.) The bounds of the water are of his appointing; he binds them as in a garment; hitherto they shall come, and no further, *Job*

xxxxviii. 9, 10, 11. (3.) The foundations of the earth are of his establishing; he founded it at first, he upholds it still; if Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth had sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground for man's sin. Who, and what is the mighty He that doth all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God unto perfection. O the depth of that knowledge!

3. To assure us of the truth of the Word of God, and to recommend it to us, *ver. 5, 6.* Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God: Alas, saith he, I cannot undertake to instruct you; go to the Word of God, see what he hath there revealed of himself, and of his mind and will, you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon, as sure and sufficient: *Every word of God is pure;* there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it: The words of men are to be heard read with a jealousy, and with an allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the Word of God; it is as silver purified seven times, *Psal. xli. 6.* without the least dross or alloy; *Thy word is very pure, Psal. cxix. 140.*

1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a shield, a sure protection to all them that put themselves under his protection and put their trust in him. The Word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, *Psal. xli. 1, 2.*

2. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it, *ver. 6. Add thou not unto his words,* because they are pure and perfect. This forbids not only the advancing of any thing in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is adding to his words, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for that one absurdity granted, that the word of any man or company of men, is to be received with the same faith and veneration as the Word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind, and not covet to be wise above what is written: for, (1.) God will resent it as an heinous affront, he will reprove thee, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity, and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his Words, or diminish from them, *Deut. iv. 2. — xii. 32.* (2.) We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes; thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of Truth, a brother of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but God is not mocked.

7. Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die. 8. Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9. Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest, I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows his litany; where we may observe,

1. The preface to his prayer: *Two things have I required,* that is, requested of thee, O God. Before we go to pray, it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God. What doth our case require? What do our hearts desire? What would we that God should do for us? that we may not be to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, *Deny me not before I die:* in praying we should think of dying, and pray accordingly: Lord, give me pardon and peace and grace before I die, before I go hence and be no more; for if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, it will not be done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers after will not prevail, no, not Lord, Lord. There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. *Deny me not thy grace,* for if thou do, I die, I perish if thou be silent to me, *I am like them that go down to the pit, Psal. cxviii. 1.* *Deny me not before I die, i. e.* as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence.

2. The prayer itself: The two things he requires, grace sufficient, and food convenient.

1. Grace sufficient for his soul. *Remove from me vanity and lies, i. e.* deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices and affections; from error and mistake, which is at the bottom of all sin; from the love of the Lord and the things of it, which are all vanity and a lie. Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for when God forgives sin he removes it, he takes it away. Or rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, *Lead us not into temptation.* Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore nothing which we should more earnestly pray against, that we may do no evil.

2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the favours of the divine providence, but such as may tend to the good, and not to the prejudice of the soul.

1. He prays that of God's free gift, he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life: *Feed me with the bread of my allowance;* such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me; for as to all the gifts of the divine providence, we must refer ourselves to the divine wisdom. Or, the bread that is fit for me, as a man, a master of a family; that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world, for as is the man, so is his competency: Our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he teacheth us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread;* as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more but *bread to eat and raiment to put on.* Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not for delight and ornament; and it is what we may in faith pray for, and depend upon God for.

2. He prays that he may be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him.

(1.) He prays against the extremes of abundance and want, *Give me neither poverty nor riches:* He doth not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him; nor doth he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as if themselves evil, for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified and be a means of good to us; but, 1. He hereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state; neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both, as St. Paul, *Phil. iv. 12.* but rather wish to be always between both. *Optimus pecunie modus qui nec in paupertate cadit nec procul a paupertate discedit.* Seneca. 2. He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or prosperous condition. Others may preserve

serve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teacheth him to pray against riches, as much as nature against poverty, but *the will of the Lord be done.*

(2.) He gives a pious reason for his prayer, *ver. 9.* he doth not say, *Left I be rich* and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbour, and eaten up with a multitude of servants. Or, *Left I be poor* and troubled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard, but *left I be rich and sin, or poor and sin.* Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition, and under every event; witness Nehemiah, *chap. vi. 13.* that *I should be afraid, and do so, and sin.*

1. He dreads the temptation of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that; *Left I be full and deny thee,* as Jehu that *waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook God that made him,* Deut. xxxii. 15. and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Prosperity makes people proud and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him, and were therefore under no obligation to him. *What can the Almighty do for them?* Job xxii. 17. and therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be; and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt.

2. He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason and no other deprecates that, *left I be poor and steal.* Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar, no more than at men's, to say I stole because I was poor; yet if a man *steal for the satisfying of his own soul when he is hungry,* it is a case of compulsion, Prov. vi. 30. and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, lest I steal and be hanged for it, whipt, or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman, as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution: but lest he should dishonour God by it, *left I should steal and take the name of my God in vain,* i. e. discredit my profession of religion by practices disagreeable to it. Or lest I steal, and when I am charged with it forswear myself. He therefore dreads one sin because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is down-hill. Observe, He calls God, his God, and therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him, because of the relation he stands in to him.

10. Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. 11. There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. 12. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. 13. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eye-lids are lifted up. 14. There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Here is, 1. A caution not to abuse other people's servants no more than our own, nor make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, *ver. 10.* Consider, (1.) It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted. *Hurt not a servant with thy tongue,* so the margin reads it, for it argues a sordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue, especially a servant that is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more. (2.) It will perhaps be an injury to thyself; if a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, will accuse thee, and bring thee into trouble; or give thee an ill word, and blemish thy reputation; or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency.

2. An account upon occasion of this caution of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good.

(1.) Such as are abusive to their parents, give them ill language, and wish them ill, call them ill names, and do them ill turns; there is a generation of such; young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents, a generation of *wipers* they are, who curse either their natural parents, or their magistrates, or ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke: and they are near akin to them, who, though they are not yet arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

(2.) Such as are conceited of themselves, and under a shew and pretence of sanctity hide from others, and perhaps from themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret, *ver. 12.* they are *pure in their own eyes,* as if they were in all respects such as they should be; they have a very good opinion of themselves and of their own character, that they are not only righteous, but *rich and increased with goods,* Rev. iii. 17. and yet are *not cleansed from their filthiness,* the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them; they are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, not sanctified; as the Pharisees that within were full of uncleanness, Matth. xxiii. 25, 26.

(3.) Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, *ver. 13.* he speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence, *O how lofty are thine eyes!* with what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock? what a distance do they expect every body should keep; and when they look upon themselves, how do they strut and vaunt like the peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious, when really they make themselves ridiculous. There is a generation of such, on whom he that *resists the proud* will pour contempt.

(4.) Such as are cruel to the poor, and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy, *ver. 14.* their teeth are iron and steel, *swords and knives,* instruments of cruelty with which they *devour the poor* with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it, that the *poor we should always have with us,* that they shall never *escape out of the land;* but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them *from the earth, from among men;* especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slanders and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues and their teeth too (which are likewise organs of speech) are *as swords and knives,* Psal. lvii. 4.

15. The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things, say not, *It is enough!* 16.

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The grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire that saith not, *It is enough.* 17. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor, *ver. 14.* and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned, now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness; now those are two daughters of the horseleech, its genuine offspring that still cry, *Give, give,* give more blood, give more money; for the bloody are still blood-thirsty, being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will seek it yet again. They also that *love silver* shall never be satisfied with silver. Thus, while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, Psal. lxi. 14, 15.

Now, 1. For further illustration of this, he instanceth in four other things which are insatiable, to which these devourers are compared, which say not, *It is enough.* Or, *It is wealth;* those are never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things are always craving. (1.) The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up and returns none. *Hell and destruction are never full,* Prov. xxvii. 20. when it comes to our turn we shall find the grave ready for us, Job xvii. 1. (2.) The barren womb, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries, as Rachel did, *Give me children.* (3.) The parched ground, in time of drought, especially in those hot countries, which still longs in the rain that comes in abundance upon it, and in a little time want more. (4.) The fire which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

2. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children, *ver. 17.* for warning to the first of those wicked generations that curse their parents, *ver. 11.* and shews here, 1. Who they are that belong to that generation; not only they that curse their parents in heat and passion, but, (1.) They that mock at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them, because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour or dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks, and angry at them. God takes notice with what eyes children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of an evil eye, as well as for ill language given them. (2.) They that *despise to obey* them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially the mother, they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bare them in sorrow, in great sorrow bears their manners.

3. What their doom will be. They that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully at their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that carry themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many that have come to an ignominious end, have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in contempt of their parents authority.

18. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 19. The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. 20. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. 21. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: 22. For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat. 23. For an odious woman when she is married, and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Here is, 1. An account of four things that are unsearchable, *too wonderful* to be fully known. And here,

1. The three first are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace, (1.) *An eagle in the air* which way she is flown cannot be discovered, either by the footstep or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon the ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she is gone beyond our ken. (2.) *A serpent upon a rock:* The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time creep to the top of a rock. (3.) *A ship in the midst of the sea:* The leviathan indeed makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary, Job xli. 32. but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves, that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders; marvellous things which the God of nature doth, *past finding out.*

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, *Jer. xvii. 9.* It is twofold;

1. The cursed arts which a vile adulterer hath to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lusts; this is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of long since, *De arte amandi;* with what pretences and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor, for to all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed, the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it.

2. The cursed arts which a vile adulteress hath to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then wipes her mouth that it may not betray itself, and with a bold and impudent face saith, *I have done no wickedness.* (1.) To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it, that she is as chaste and modest as any woman; and

never did that wickedness she is suspected of. They are works of darkness, which are industriously kept from coming to light. (2.) To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that great wickedness is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See *Hof. xii. 7, 8.* Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good, and outfacing their convictions with self-justification.

3. An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live, and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is *disquieted for them*, and groans under them as a burden it cannot bear, and they are all much alike.

(1.) *A servant* when he is advanced and intrusted with power, who is of all other most insolent and imperious; witness *Tobiah the servant*, the Ammonite, *Neh. ii. 10.* (2.) *A fool*, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, when he is grown rich, and has got his belly full, and his head full too at a good dinner, he will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk, and the affronts he will put upon those about him. (3.) *An ill-natured, cross-grained woman*, when she gets a husband, who, having made herself odious by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought any body should have loved her, yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is pity that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging. (4.) An old maid servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her and getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she was to be her heir, such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those therefore whom providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings, carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable, and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

24. There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise; 25. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer; 26. The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their house in the rocks; 27. The locusts have no king, yet they go forth ail of them by bands; 28. The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.

Agur having instanced in four things that seem great, and yet are really contemptible, here instanceth in four things that are little to see to, and yet are very admirable, great in miniature; in which, as Bishop Patrick observes, he teacheth us several good lessons; as, 1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, or to value persons for that, or think the better of them, but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect. 2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as much as in an elephant. 3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs. 4. Not to despise the weak things of the world; there are those that are little upon the earth, poor in the world, and of small account, and yet are exceeding wise, wise for their souls and another world, and those are exceeding wise, wiser than their neighbours. Margin. *They are wise, made wise by the special instinct of nature; all that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God.* Those he instanceth in, are,

1. The ants, minute animals and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time: this is so great a piece of wisdom, that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, *Prov. vi. 6.* When the ravens have lack and suffer hunger, the laborious ants have plenty, and know no want.

2. The conies, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field-mice, weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to make their houses in the rocks, where they are all well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness should drive us to him that is a rock higher than we for shelter and support, there let us make our habitation.

3. The locusts, they are little also, and have no king, as the bees have, but they go forth all of them by bands, like an army in battle-array; and observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they have no king. They are called God's great army, *Joel ii. 25.* for when he pleaseth he muster, he marshals them, and wadgeth war by them, as he did upon Egypt. They go forth all of them gathered together; so the margin; sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands of one another.

4. The spider, an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness, such as no art can pretend to come near; they take hold with their hands, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in king's palaces, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up those species of creatures, not only which men provide not for; but which every man's hand is against and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in king's palaces; sooner or later will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

29. There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: 30. A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any: 31. A grey-hound; an he-goat also; and a king against whom there is no rising up. 32. If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. 33. Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Here is, (1.) An enumeration of four things that are majestic and stately in their going, which look great.

1. A lion the king of beasts, because strongest amongst beasts, and amongst

beasts it is strength that gives the pre-eminence, but it is pity it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force; the lion turns not away, nor alters his pace for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, that they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

2. A grey-hound that is girt in the loins, and fit for running; or, as the margin reads it, a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings.

3. A he-goat, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first, and leads the flock; it is the comeliness of a christian's going, to go first in a good work, and to lead others in the right way.

4. A king, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence and awe, and all agree, there is no rising up against him, none can compare with him, none can contend with him, who verily doth, it is at his peril. And if there is no rising up against an earthly prince, how to him then that strives with his Maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the lion, and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the grey-hound we may learn quickness of dispatch; from the he-goat, the care of our family, and those under our charge; and from a king, to have our children in subjection with all gravity; and from them all, to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation, so that we may not only be safe, but comely in going.

(2.) A caution to us to keep our temper at all times, and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up; when it is a ruler, or one much our superior or is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

1. We must bridle and suppress our own passions, and take shame to ourselves, whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocence. If we have lifted up ourselves, either in a proud conceit of ourselves, or a peevish opposition to those that are over us; if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have then done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others, or against others, that are haughty and insolent, they do but shame themselves, and betray their own weakness; nay, if we have but thought evil, if we be conscious to ourselves, that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth, i. e. (1.) We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God as for our fault, as *Jehoiada*, when he repented of what he said foolishly, *chap. xl. 1. I will lay my hand upon my mouth*; and as the convicted sinner, *put a covering upon his upper lip*. If we have done foolishly, we must not stand in it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended. (2.) We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches; do not give the evil thought an imprimatur, allow it not to be published, but lay thy hand upon thy mouth, use a holy violence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as *Christ suffered not the evil spirits to speak*. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it; for that implies a consent to the evil thought, and a willingness to infect others with it.

2. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and carriage, that they even force wrath, they make those about them angry whether they will or no, and put them into a passion, who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this forcing of wrath brings forth strife, and where that is, there is confusion and every evil work. As the violent agitation of the cream fetcheth all the good out of the milk, and the hard wringing of the nose, will extort blood from it, so this forcing of wrath wastes both the body and the spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the churning of milk, and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force which otherwise would not be done; so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions, one angry word begets another, and that a third; one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on, till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds; let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is tacked to Solomon's proverbs, some think, because it is of the same author, supposing King Lemuel to be king Solomon; others, only because it is of the same nature, though left in writing by another author, called Lemuel; however it be, it is a prophecy, and therefore given by inspiration and direction of God; which Lemuel was under in the writing of it, and putting it into this form, as his mother was in dictating to him the matter of it. Here is, 1. An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to, and to do the duties of the place he was called to, ver. 1—9. 2. The description of a virtuous woman, especially in the relation of a wife, and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of herself, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but either as an instruction to her daughters, as the foregoing verses were to her son, or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife; she must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God; such a one as this, if he can find her, will make him happy, ver. 10—31.

1. THE words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. 2. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? 3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. 4. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink: 5. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. 6. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts. 7. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. 8. Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. 9. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Most

Most interpreters are of opinion, that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name which, by divine appointment, was given to Solomon, 2 Sam. xii. 25. *Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord*. Lemuel is supposed to be a pretty, fond, endearing name, by which his mother used to call him; and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections, that he was not ashamed to call himself by it: And one would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that here tells us what *his mother taught him*, because we tell us, chap. iv. 4. what his father taught him. But some think (and the conjecture is not improbable) that Lemuel was a prince of some neighbouring country, whose mother was a daughter of Israel, perhaps of the house of David, and taught him these good lessons. Note, 1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it; and what is evil, that they may avoid it; when they are young and tender, they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of moulding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip. 2. Even kings must be catechized; the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God. 3. Those that are grown up to maturity, should often call to mind, and make mention of the good instructions they received when they were children, for their own admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of those who were the guides of their youth.

Now in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe,

(1.) Her exhortation with the young prince, by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest with him, and awakens his attention to what she was about to say, ver. 2. *What, my son? what shall I say to thee?* She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him; so full of concern is she for his welfare! Or, What is this that thou doest? It seems to be a chiding question: She observed when he was young that he was too much inclined to women and wine, and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task, and deal roundly with him. *What, my son?* Is this the course of life thou intendest to lead? Have I taught thee no better than this? I must reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for,

1. Thou art descended from me, thou art *the son of my womb*, and therefore what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent, and cannot be suspected to come from any ill will; thou art a *piece of myself*, I bare thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee, and undergone for thee, but this only, Be wise and good, and then I am well paid.

2. Thou art devoted to my God, thou art *the son of my vows*; the son I prayed to God to give me, and promised to give back to God, and did so; thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows; thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to; (1 Sam. xii. 1.) And shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? And shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed? Our children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for whom, and in whose name we covenanted with God, may well be called *the children of our vows*; and as this may be made a good plea with God in our prayers for them, so it may be made a good plea with them in the instructions we give them; we may tell them they are baptized, *are the children of our vows*, and it is at their peril if they break those bonds in sunder which in their infancy they were solemnly brought under.

(2.) The caution she gives him against those two destroying sins of uncleanness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin.

(1.) Against uncleanness, ver. 3. *Give not thy strength unto women*, unto strange women; he must not be soft and effeminate; nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies, which should be spent in getting knowledge and dispatching business; nor employ that wit which is the strength of the soul, in courting and complimenting them, which he should employ about the affairs of his government: Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which wastes the strength of the body, and brings it into dangerous diseases: *Give not thy ways*, thy affections, thy conversation to that which destroys kings, which has destroyed many; which gave such a shock to the kingdom, even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah. Let others' harms be thy warnings. It lessens the honour of kings, and makes them mean: Are those fit to govern others, that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings lie exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewithal to please the humours, and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard; and if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, must themselves be patterns of purity. And meaner people may apply it to themselves: Let none give their strength to that which destroys souls.

2. Against drunkenness, ver. 4, 5. He must not drink wine, or strong drink to excess; must never sit to drink as they used to do in the day of the king, when the princes made him sick with bottles of wine, Eccl. vii. 5. Whatever temptation he might be in by the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself and be strictly sober, considering,

(1.) The indecency of drunkenness in a king: However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings* to allow themselves that liberty: it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown, by muddling the head that wears it; that which for a time unmans them, doth for the time unking them. Shall we say they are gods? no, they are *worse than the beasts that perish*. All christians are made to our God kings and priests, and must apply this to themselves: *It is not for christians, it is not for christians to drink to excess*, they debase themselves if they do; it ill becomes the heirs of the kingdom and the spiritual priests, Lev. x. 9.

(2.) The ill consequences of it, ver. 5. *Let them drink away their understanding and memories, drink and forget the law* by which they are to govern; and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, and *pervert or alter the judgment of all the sons of affliction*, and when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets, Isa. xxviii. 7. that *they have erred through wine, and through strong drink they are out of the way*, and the effect is as ill in kings, who, when they are drunk, or intoxicated with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment. Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have who so often make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

(3.) The counsel she gives him to do good.

1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance, only that out of it they may make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it, and may the more freely indulge their own genius; no, but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, ver. 6, 7. Thou hast wine and strong drink at command, instead of doing thyself hurt with it, do others good with it, let them have it that need it; those that have wherewithal must not only give bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, but they must give strong drink to him that is ready to perish through sickness or pain, and wine to those that are melancholy and of

heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and make glad the heart, as it doth where there is need of it; not to burden and oppress the spirits, as it doth where there is no need of it. We must deny ourselves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of others' miseries, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to, than upon ourselves, when they will be a real injury to. Let those that are ready to perish drink liberally, and it will be a means so to revive their drooping spirits, that they will forget their poverty for the time, and remember their misery no more; and so be the better able to bear it. The Jews say, that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupefying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour. But the scope of the place is to shew that wine is a cordial, and therefore to be used for want, and not for wantonness, by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to drink a little wine, only for his stomach sake, and his often infirmities, 1 Tim. v. 23.

2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest; must administer justice with care, and courage, and calmness, ver. 8, 9. (1.) He must himself take cognizance of the causes his subjects have depending in his courts, and inspect what his judges and officers did, that he might support those that did their duty, and lay those aside that neglected it, or were partial. (2.) He must in all matters that were before him judge righteously, and, without fear of the face of man, boldly pass sentence according to equity: *Open thy mouth*; which notes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. And some observe, that wise men only open the mouths, for fools have their mouths always open, are full of words. (3.) He must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocency; the inferior magistrates perhaps had not zeal and tenderness enough to plead the cause of the poor and needy, therefore the king himself must interpose, and appear as an advocate; 1. For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was; that were appointed to destruction, to gratify the malice either of a particular person, or a party: It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in for the preserving of innocent blood. 2. For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defraud them of their right, because they were poor and needy, and unable to defend him, not having wherewithal to see counsel: in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially, 3. For those that were dumb, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or fear, or being over-talked by the prosecutor, or over-awed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves, that are abled, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of counsel for the prisoner.

10. ¶ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. 13. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14. She is like the merchants' ships, she bringeth her food from afar. 15. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. 21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. 23. Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25. Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. 29. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. 30. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. 31. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This description of the virtuous woman is designed to shew what wives the women should make, and what wives the men should choose; it consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the Psalms; which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel's mother taught him, but a poem by itself, writ by some other hand, and perhaps had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the ease of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. iii. 1—6. where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife; and with good reason is so much stressed upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a house, every one is sensible: He that will strive must ask his wife leave.

Here is, 1. A general enquiry after such a one, ver. 10. where observe, 1. The person enquired after; and that is a virtuous woman, a woman of strength, so the word is; though the weaker vessel, yet made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God; it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges, Eccl. xviii. 21. that they are able men, men qualified for the business to which they are called, men of truth, fear-

ing God. So it follows, a *virtuous woman* is a woman of spirit, i. e. that has the command of her own spirit, and knows how to manage other people's; one that is pious and industrious, and a help meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an *impetuous, whorish woman*, Ezek. xvi. 30. A *virtuous woman* is a woman of resolution, that, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened by winds and clouds from any part of her duty. 2. The difficulty of meeting with such a one: *Who can find her?* Which intimates, that good women are very scarce; and many that seem to be so do not prove so; but he that thought he had found a *virtuous woman* was deceived: *Behold, it was Leah*, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye in all his enquiries, and to take heed that he be not biased by beauty or gaiety, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well, for all these may be, and yet the woman not virtuous; and there is many a woman truly virtuous, who yet is not recommended by these advantages. 3. The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that hath such a wife ought to put upon her, and to shew it by his thankfulness to God, and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for; *her praise is far above rubies*, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves: And the more rare such wives are, the more they are to be valued.

2. A particular description of her, and of her excellent qualifications.

(1.) She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection. Those that are good really, will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the married state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to *please her husband*, 1 Cor. vii. 34. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet *her desire is to her husband*, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and willing she is that *he rule over her*.

1. She carries herself so that he may repose an intire confidence in her; in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect, or to entertain any jealousy of; she is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and carriage; her husband knows it, and therefore his *heart doth safely trust in her*; he is easy, and makes her so: He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach: He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels, or have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad, to attend the concerns of the public, he can confide in her to order all his affairs at home, as well as if he himself were there. She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he a good husband that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him.

2. She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction, that *he shall have no need of spoil*; he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wasteful at home. She manages his affairs so that he is always beforehand, hath such plenty of his own, that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself happy in her, that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs it not, he has enough having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other!

3. She makes it her constant business to *do him good*, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, ver. 19. She shews her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words and not ill ones, no, not when he is out of humour; studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when any thing ails him; and would not for the world wilfully do any thing that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation. And this is her care *all the days of her life*: not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she doth to him: *She doth him good*, not only *all the days of his life*, but of her own too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness shewed, not only to the living, but to the dead, Ruth ii. 20.

4. She adds to his reputation in the world, ver. 23. *Her husband is known in the gates*, known to have a good wife: By his wife's counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance and pleasant humour it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not, have their tempers strangely soured by it. Nay, by his appearing clean and neat in his dress, every thing about him decent and handsome, and not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home that takes care of his clothes.

(2.) She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place, and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here.

1. She hates to sit still and do nothing, *she eats not the bread of idleness*, ver. 27. Though she needs not work for her bread, she has an estate to live upon, yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, and when we have nothing to do, the devil will soon find us something to do; and those that *will not labour*, it is not fit they should eat. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do; and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish of at all, for she neither gives nor receives idle visits or idle talk.

2. She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. When daylight is gone, she doth not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the fields, Psalm. civ. 23. but her business lying within doors, and her work with candle-light, with that she lengthens out the day; and *her candle goes not out by night*, ver. 18. It is a mercy to have candle-light to supply the want of day-light, and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece that it smells of the lamp.

3. *She riseth early, while it is yet night*, ver. 15. to give her servants their breakfast, that they may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing at cards, or dancing till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon; no, the *virtuous woman* loves her business better than her ease or her pleasure; is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having *given meat to her household* betimes in the morning, than those can have in the money they have won, much more in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of, should not love their bed too well in a morning.

4. She applies herself to the business that is proper for her. It is not in scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business that she employs herself, but in women's business; *she seeks wool and flax*, where she may have the best of each at the best hand, and best cheap; has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and linen manufacture, ver. 13. and with this, she doth not

only set the poor on work, which is a very good office, but doth herself work, and *work willingly with her hands*; she *works with the counsel or delight of her hands*; so the word is; she goes about it cheerfully and dexterously; not only lays her hand but her mind to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well-doing. *She lays her own hands to the spindle*, or spinning wheel, and *her hands hold the distaff*, ver. 19. and she doth not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty, or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, Isa. iii. 18.

5. She doth what she doth with all her might, and doth not trifle in it, ver. 17. *She girdeth her loins with strength*, and *strengthens her arms*; she doth not employ herself in sitting work only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the fingers; there are works that are scarce one remove from doing nothing; but if there be occasion, she will go through with work that requires all the strength she has, which she will use as one that knows it is the way to have more.

(3.) She is one that makes what she doth to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it; she doth not toil all night, and catch nothing; no, she herself perceives that *her merchandise is good*, ver. 18. she is sensible that in all her labour there is profit, and that encourageth her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them; she finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and that she applies herself most closely to.

1. She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, ver. 14. No *merchants' ships*, no, not Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do: Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? so doth she with the fruit of her labours: What her own ground doth not produce, she can furnish herself with it, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and *she brings her food from afar*: Not that she values things the more for their being far-fetched, but, if they be never so far off, if she must have them, she knows how to come by them.

2. She purchaseth lands, and enlargeth the demesne of the family, ver. 16. *She considereth a field, and buyeth it*: She considers what an advantage it will be to the family, and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or rather, though she have never so much mind of it, she will not buy it, till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it; whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she have money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering, but those who would make advantageous purchases, must consider, and then buy. *She also planteth a vineyard*, but it is *with the fruits of her hands*; she doth not take up money, or run into debt to do it, but she doth it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they are got before hand, and can afford it; and then the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet, when it is the fruit of honest industry.

3. She furnisheth her house well, and has good clothing for herself and her family, ver. 22. *She maketh herself coverings of tapestry* to hang her rooms, and she may be allowed to use them, when they are of her own making; *her own clothing is rich and fine*, it is *silk and purple*, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing her, nor makes the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself by it, yet she has rich clothes, and puts them on well. The senator's robes her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better and wear better than any that are bought. She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants' liveries; she needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing: *All her household are clothed in scarlet*, strong cloth, and fit for winter, and yet rich, and making a good appearance. They are *all double clothed*, so some read it; have change of raiment, a winter suit, and a summer suit.

4. She trades abroad, she makes more than she and her household have occasion for, and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, *she sells fine linen and girdles to the merchants*, ver. 24. who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy, as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell what they can spare, nor to deal in trade, and send ventures by sea.

5. She lays up for hereafter; *she shall rejoice in time to come*, having laid in a good stock for her family, and having good portions for her children. Those that take pains when they are in their prime, will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it, and reaping the benefit of it.

(4.) She takes care of her family, and all the affairs of it, *gives meat to her household*, ver. 15. to every one *their portion of meat in due season*, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short, or faring hard. She also gives a portion, i. e. an allotment of work as well as meat, to her maidens; they shall each of them know their business, and have their talk. *She looks well to the ways of her household*, ver. 27. i. e. she inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to carry themselves decently, and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her; as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle; and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She doth not intermeddle in the concerns of other people's houses, she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

(5.) She is charitable to the poor, ver. 20. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting, often serves the poor with her own hand, and she doth it freely and cheerfully, and very liberally, with an outstretched hand. Nor doth she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but *she reacheth forth her hands to the needy* that are at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good and to communicate; which is as good housewifery as any thing she does.

(6.) She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse; not talkative, contentious, or peevish, as some are that know how to take pains; no, *she opens her mouth with wisdom*: when she doth speak, it is with a great deal of prudence and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word the faith, how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom: She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend, and an obliging air; *in her tongue is the law of kindness*; i. e. all the faith is under the government of that law; the law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shews itself in the tongue: If we are kindly affected one to another, it will appear by affectionate expressions. It is called a *law of kindness*, because it gives law to others, to all the conversation.

verfeth with; her wisdom and kindnefs together put a commanding power into all the faith, they command refpect, they command compliance: How forcible are right words! *In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy*, fo fome read it, and underftand it of the word and law of God, which the delights to talk of among her children and fervants: She is full of pious religious difcourfe, and manageth it prudently; which fhews how full her heart is of another world, even when her hands are moft bufy about this world.

(7.) That which completes and crowns her character is, that *ſhe fears the Lord*, ver. 30. With all theſe good qualities ſhe lacks not that *one thing needful*; ſhe is truly pious, and in all ſhe doth is guided and governed by principles of confcience, and regard to God; this is that which is here preferred far before *beauty*, that is *vain and deceitful*: all that are wiſe and good account it ſo, and neither value themſelves nor others by it. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wiſdom and goodnefs, but has deceived many a man who has made choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure deformed ſoul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been expoſed by their beauty to ſuch temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious ſouls. It is a fading thing at the beſt, and therefore *vain and deceitful*; a fit of ſicknefs will ſtain and ſully it in a little time; a thouſand accidents may blaſt this flower in its prime: However, old age will certainly wither it, and death and the grave conſume it; but the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the ſoul; it recommends thoſe who have it to the favour of God, is in his ſight of great price; it will laſt for ever, and bid defiance to death itſelf, which conſumes the beauty of the body, but conſummates the beauty of the ſoul.

3. The happinefs of this virtuous woman.

(1.) She has the comfort and ſatisfaction of her virtue in her own mind, ver. 25. *Strength and honour are her cloathing*, in which ſhe wraps herſelf, that is, enjoys himſelf, and in which ſhe appears to the world, and ſo recommends herſelf. She enjoys a firmnefs and conſtancy of mind, has a ſpirit to bear up under the many croſſes and diſappointments which even the wife and virtuous muſt expect to meet with in this world, and this is her cloathing, for defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and ſhe has the pleaſure of doing ſo, *and ſhall rejoice in time to come*; ſhe ſhall reflect upon it with comfort when ſhe comes to be old, that ſhe was not idle or uſeleſs when ſhe was young: In the day of death it will be a pleaſure to her to think that ſhe has lived to ſome good purpoſe: Nay, *ſhe ſhall rejoice in an eternity to come*, ſhall be recompenſed for her goodnefs with *fullneſs of joy, and pleaſures for evermore*.

(2.) She is a great bleſſing to her relations, ver. 28.

1. *Her children* grow up in her place, *and they call her bleſſed*; they give her their good word, they are themſelves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bleſs God that they had ſuch a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour which is due to a good father and a good mother.

2. *Her husband* thinks himſelf ſo happy in her, that he takes all occaſions to ſpeak well of her, as one of the beſt of women. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable inſtance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praifes.

(3.) She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom *all the city of her people knew* to be a virtuous woman, Ruth iii. 11. Virtue will have its praife. *Phil. iv. 8.* A woman that fears the Lord ſhall have praife of God, Rom. ii. 29. and of men too. It is here ſhewed,

1. That ſhe ſhall be highly praized, ver. 29. *Many have done virtuoſly*; virtuous women, it ſeems, are precious jewels, but not ſuch rare jewels as was reprefented, ver. 10. there have been many, but ſuch a one as this cannot be paralleled; *who can find her equal? ſhe excelleth them all.* Note, Thoſe that are good ſhould aim and covet to excel in virtue. *Many daughters* in their father's houſe, and in a ſingle ſtate, *have done virtuoſly*, but a good wife, if ſhe be virtuous, *excells them all*, and doth more good in her place than they can do in theirs. Or, as ſome explain it, A man cannot have his houſe ſo well kept by good daughters as by a good wife.

2. That ſhe ſhall be inextinguibly praized, without contradiction, ver. 31. Some are praized above what is their due, but thoſe that praize her do but *give her the fruit of her hands*, i. e. they give her that which ſhe has dearly earned, and which is juſtly owing to her; ſhe is wronged if ſhe have it not.

Note, Thoſe ought to be praized, the fruit of whoſe hands is praife-worthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore if the fruit be good, the tree muſt have our good word. If her children be dutiful and reſpectful to her, and carry themſelves as they ought, they then *give her of the fruit of her hands*; ſhe reaps the benefit of all the care ſhe has taken of them, and thinks herſelf well paid. Children muſt thus ſtudy to *rejoice their parents*, and that is *ſhewing piety at home*, 1 Tim. v. 4. But if men be unjuſt, the thing will ſpeak itſelf, *her own works will praize her in the gates*, openly before all the people. 1. She owes it to her own works to praize her, and doth not court the applauſe of men.—There are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themſelves commended. 2. *Her own works will praize her*; if her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praife. The widows gave the beſt encomiums of Dorcas, when they *ſhewed the ſeats and garments ſhe had made for the poor*, Acts ix. 39. 3. The beaſt that can be expected from her neighbours is, that they ſhould *let her own works praize her*, and do nothing to hinder them. They that *do that which is good*, let them *have praife of the ſum*, Rom. xiii. 3. and let us not enviously ſay or do any thing to the diminution of it, but be provoked to it by a holy emulation: Let none have an ill report from us that have a good report, *even of the truth itſelf*. Thus is ſhut up this looking glaſs for ladies, which they are deſired to open, and dreſs themſelves by it; and if they do ſo, their adorning will be found to praize, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

Twenty Chapters of the Book of Proverbs, (beginning with chap. x. and ending with chap. xxix.) conſiſting moſtly of entire ſentences in each verſe, could not well be reduced to proper heads and the contents of them gathered; I have therefore here put the contents of theſe chapters together, which perhaps may be of ſome uſe to thoſe who deſire to ſee at once all that is ſaid of any one head in theſe chapters. I take the heads in no method, but as they occurred in reading the chapters; ſome of the verſes perhaps I have not put under the ſame heads that another would have put them under, but the moſt of them fall (I hope) naturally enough to the places I have aſſigned them.

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A N E X P O S I T I O N, W I T H P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S, Upon the Book of ECCLESIASTES.

We are still among Solomon's happy men, his happy servants, that *flood continually before him to bear his wisdom*; and they are the choicest of all the dictates of his wisdom, such as were more immediately given by divine inspiration, that are transmitted to us, not to be heard as by them but once, and then liable to be mistaken or forgotten, and by repetition to lose their beauty, but to be read, reviewed, revolved, and had in everlasting remembrance. The account we have of Solomon's apostacy from God in the latter end of his reign, 1 *Kings xi. 1.* is the tragical part of his story; we may suppose he spoke his Proverbs in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his Ecclesiastes when he was grown old (for the burdens and decays of age he speaks feelingly, *chap. xii.*) and was, by the grace of God, recovered from his backslidings: there he dictated his observations, here he wrote his own experiences; this is what days speak, and wisdom which the multitude of years teacheth. The title of the book and the penman we shall meet with in the first verse, and therefore shall here only observe,

1. That it is a Sermon, a Sermon in print, the text is, *chap. i. 2. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*; that is the doctrine too; it is proved at large by many arguments and an induction of particulars, and divers objections are answered, and in the close we have the use and application of all, by way of exhortation, to *remember our Creator, to fear him, and to keep his commandments*. There are indeed many things in this book which are dark and hard to be understood, and some things which men of corrupt minds *wrest to their own destruction*; for want of distinguishing between Solomon's arguments, and the objections of atheists and epicures; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us (if we will admit the conviction) of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy, the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable; and of the wisdom of being religious, and the solid comfort and satisfaction that is to be had in doing our duty both to God and man; this should be intended in every sermon, and that is a good sermon by which these points are in any measure gained.
2. That it is a penitential sermon, as some of David's psalms are penitential psalms; it is a recantation sermon, in which the preacher sadly laments his own folly and mistake, in promising himself satisfaction in the things of this world, and even in the forbidden pleasures of sense, which now he finds more bitter than death. His fall is the proof of the weakness of man's nature; *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor say, I shall never be such a fool to do so and so, when Solomon himself, the wisest of men, played the fool so egregiously; nor let the rich man glory in his riches, since Solomon's wealth was so great a snare to him, and did him a great deal more hurt than Job's poverty did him.* His recovery is a proof of the power of God's grace, in bringing one back to God that had gone so far from him, and the riches of God's mercy in accepting him, notwithstanding the many aggravations of his sin, pursuant to the promise made to David, *that if his children should commit iniquity, they should be corrected, but not abandoned and disinherited, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.* Let him therefore that *thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*, and let him that is fallen, make haste to get up again and not despair either of assistance or of acceptance therein.
3. That it is a practical, profitable sermon: Solomon being brought to repentance, resolves, like his father, to *teach transgressors God's way*, *Psal. li. 13.* and to give warning to all to take heed of splitting upon those rocks which had been fatal to him; and these were *fruits meet for repentance*. The fundamental error of the children of men, and that which is at the bottom of all their departures from God, is the same with that of our first parents, hoping to be *as gods*, by entertaining themselves with that which seems *good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise*. Now the scope of this book is to shew, that this is a great mistake; that our happiness consists not in being as gods to ourselves; to have what we will, and do what we will, but in having him that made us to be a God to us. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's felicity or chief good, various opinions they had about it, but Solomon in this book determines the question, and assures us, that *to fear God and to keep his commandments is the whole of man*. He tried what satisfaction might be found in the wealth of the world, and pleasures of sense, and at last pronounced *all vanity and vexation*; yet multitudes will not take his word, but will make the same dangerous experiment, and it proves fatal to them. He, 1. Shews the vanity of those things in which men commonly look for happiness, as human learning and policy, sensual delights, honour and power, riches and great possessions. And then, 2. He prescribes remedies against the vexation of spirit that attends them. Though we cannot cure them of their vanity, we may prevent the trouble they give us, by sitting loose to them, enjoying them comfortably, but laying our expectations low from them, and acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event, especially by remembering God in the days of our youth, and continuing in his fear and service all our days, with an eye to the judgment to come.

C H A P.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. The inscription or title of the book, ver. 1. 2. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down, ver. 2. and explained, ver. 3. 2. The proof of this doctrine, taken, (1.) From the shortness of human life, and the multitude of births and burials in this life, ver. 4. (2.) From the inconstant nature, and constant revolutions of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in; the sun, wind, and water, ver. 5, 6, 7. (3.) From the abundant toil man has about them, and the little satisfaction he has in them, ver. 8. (4.) From the return of the same things again, which shews the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exhausted, ver. 9, 10. (5.) From the oblivion to which all things are condemned, ver. 11. (4.) The first instance of the vanity of men's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politics. Observe, (1.) The trial Solomon made of these, ver. 12, 13, 16, 17. (2.) His judgment of them; that all is vanity, ver. 14. For, 1. There is labour in getting knowledge, ver. 13. 2. There is little good to be done with it, ver. 15. 3. There is no satisfaction in it, ver. 18. And if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world, being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy unless he be a true saint.

1. **T**HE words of the Preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem. 2. Vanity of vanities, faith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Here is, 1. An account of the penman of this book: it was Solomon, for no other son of David but he was king of Jerusalem; but he conceals his name Solomon; Preacher, because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God, and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name: call me not Solomon, call me Marah, for behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But he calls himself,

1. The preacher; which speaks his present character: He is *Kohleth*, which comes from a word that signifies to gather; but it is of a feminine termination, by which, perhaps, Solomon intends to upbraid himself with his effeminacy, which contributed more than any thing to his apostasy; for it was, to please his wives that he set up idols, *Neh. xiii. 20.* Or the word *Soul* must be understood, and so *Kohleth* is,

(1.) A penitent soul, or one gathered; that had rambl'd and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself; the spirit that was dissipated after a thousand vanities, is now collected and made to center in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even those to repentance that after they had known the way of righteousness turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head that is bowed down like a bulrush only for a day; David's repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its by-paths, and no longer scatters its way to the strangers, *Jer. iii. 13* but is united to fear God's name. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into a gross sin, they are concerned for the honour of God; and repairing the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the plaster may be as wide as the wound.

(2.) A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, and reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it that had gone astray like him, and perhaps were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother, ought to do all he can to reclaim him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple, *1 Kings viii. 2.* so now at the re-dedicating of himself: in that assembly he presided as the people's mouth to God in prayer, ver. 12. in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God by his Spirit made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him; a commission is an implicit pardon; Christ sufficiently signified his forgiving Peter by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers, they that have taken warning themselves to turn and live, should give warning to others not to go on and die. *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.* Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the gospel in his Son, *Rom. i. 9.*

2. The son of David. His taking this title intimates, (1.) That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a man, and valued himself very much upon it. (2.) That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin, that he had such a father who had given him a good education, and put up many good prayers for him; it cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim that he was the son of Josiah, *Jer. xxii. 15, 16, 17.* (3.) That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent and hope for mercy, for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and therein he took example from him, and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all, he was the son of David concerning whom God had said, that though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, *Psal. lxxxix. 34.* Christ the great preacher was the Son of David.

3. King of Jerusalem. This he mentions, (1.) As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin, that he was a king; God had done much for him in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill requited him; his dignity made the ill example and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways. That he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests the Lord's ministers were, and his prophets who had taught him better things. (2.) As that which might give some advantage to what he wrote, for where the word of a king is, there is power. He thought it no disparagement to him, as a king, to be a preacher, but the people would regard him the more as a preacher, because he was a king. If men of honour would lay out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world, as on his throne of ivory, judging.

The Chaldee paraphrase (which in this book makes very large additions to the text, or comments upon it all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book: That by the spirit of prophecy he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son; and in process of time the destruction of Jeru-

salem, and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people; and in the foresight of that he said, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*; and to that he applied many passages in this book.

2. The general scope and design of the book. What is it that this royal preacher has to say? That which he aims at is for the making of us truly religious, to take down our esteem of and expectation from the things of this world. In order to this he shews,

1. That they are all vanity, ver. 2. This is the proposition he lays down, and undertakes to prove, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* It was no new text, his father David had more than once spoken to the same purpose. The truth itself here asserted is, that all is vanity; all besides God, and considered as abstract from him: That all of this world; all worldly employments and enjoyments; the all that is in the world, *1 John ii. 16*, all that which is agreeable to our senses and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves, or reputation with others; it is all vanity, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it: man, considered with reference to these things is vanity, *Psal. xxxix. 5, 6*, and if there were not another life after this, were made in vain, *Psal. lxxxix. 47.* and those things, considered in reference to man, (whatever they are in themselves) are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it, they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading, and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore love vanity, *Psal. iv. 2.* nor lift up our souls to it, *Psal. xxiv. 4.* for we shall but weary ourselves for it, *Heb. ii. 13.*

It is expressed here very emphatically; not only *all is vain*, but in the abstract, *all is vanity*, as if vanity were the *proprium quædam modo* of the things of this world, which enters into the nature of them. They are not only vanity, but *vanity of vanities*, the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree; nothing but vanity; such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain and past dispute, it is *vanity of vanities*. This intimates, that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of, and much affected with, this truth, and that he was very desirous that others should be convinced of it and affected with it as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loath to believe it and consider it, *Job xxxiii. 14.* it intimates likewise that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But who is it that speaks thus slightly of the world, it is one that will stand to what he saith? Yes, he puts his name to it, *saith the preacher*. Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was; many speak contemptibly of the world, because they are heathens and know it not, or beggars and have it not; because Solomon knew it, he had dived into nature's depths, *1 Kings iv. 33.* and he had it, more of it perhaps than ever any man had, his head filled with its notions, and his belly with its hid treasures, *Psal. xvii. 14.* and he passeth his judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher; he spake in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No, he said it deliberately, said it and proved it; laid it down as a fundamental principle, on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed was to shew, that the everlasting throne and kingdom which God had by Nathan promised to David and his seed, must be of another world; for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon find all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That they are sufficient to make us happy. And for this he appeals to men's consciences: *What profit has a man for all the pains he takes?* ver. 3. Observe here,

1. The business of this world described: It is labour, the word signifies both care and toil; it is work that wearies men; there is a constant fatigue in worldly business: it is labour under the sun, that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour, and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work under the sun, the pains of which are great and the gains little. It is under the sun, under the influence of the sun, by its light and its heat; we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we have sometimes the burden and heat of the day, *Mat. xx. 12.* and therefore in the sweat of our face we eat bread, in the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest.

2. The benefit of the business enquired into; *What profit has a man of all that labour?* Solomon saith, *Prov. xiv. 3.* In all labour there is profit, and yet here he denies there is any profit: as to our present condition in the world, it is true that by labour we get that which we call profit; we eat the labour of our hands; but as the wealth of the world is commonly called substance, and yet it is that which is not, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* so it is called profit, but the question is, whether it be really so or not? And here he determines that it is not; that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had never so much of it, is not sufficient to make us happy, nor will it be a portion for us. (1.) As to the body, and the life that now is, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* A man's life consisteth not in an abundance, *Luke xii. 15.* As goods are increased, care about them is increased, and they are increased that eat of them, and a little thing will imber all the comfort of them, and then what profit has a man of all his labour? *Early up, and never the wiser.* (2.) As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy his desires; will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor countervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is meat that endures to eternal life, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only meat that perisheth.

4. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. 5. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 6. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 8. All things are full of labour, men cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

To prove the vanity of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy. Solomon here shews,

1. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we *accomplish as a hireling his day*: we continue in the world but for one generation, which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing within. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are *vani* y: they can be no more substantial than that life which is the *sub-stratum* of them, and that it is but a *vapour*, which appears for a little while, and then *vanisheth away*. While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, what little enjoyment has one drop of that stream of the pleasant banks between which it glides. We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations in which the word has hitherto had its existence, and will have to the end of time, admiring his patience in continuing that sinful species, and his power in continuing that dying species; we may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and in concern for mankind in general, we should consult the welfare of succeeding generations: but as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits, but in an eternal rest and consistency.

2. That when we leave this world we leave the world behind us, that *abideth for ever* where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state: it is well for mankind in general, that the earth endures to the end of time, when it and all the works in it shall be burnt up; but what is that to particular persons when they remove to the world of spirits?

3. That the condition of man is in this respect worse than that even of the inferior creatures. *The earth abideth for ever*, but man abides upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it riseth again in the morning as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet in some point or other still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground, come from it again under ground; *but man lies down and rises not*, Job. xiv. 7—12.

4. That all things in this world are moveable and mutable, and subject to a continual toil and toils, constant in nothing but inconstancy, still going, never resting; it was but once that the sun stood still, otherwise when it is risen it is hastening to set, and when it is set, hastening to rise again, *ver. 5.* the winds ever and anon shifting, *ver. 6.* and the waters in a continual circulation, *ver. 7.* it would be of as ill consequence for them to stagnate, as for the blood in the body to do so: and can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour? *ver. 8.* on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling?

5. That though all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were; the sun *parts*, as it is in the margin, but it is to the same place; the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the same place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun, and wind, and rivers, but never satisfied, never contented, the more it has of the world the more it would have; and it would be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brook of *honey and butter*, Job. xx. 17. than the sea is with *all the rivers that run into it*; it is still as it was, a *troubled sea that cannot rest*.

6. That *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 4. the earth is where it was, the sun, and winds, and rivers, keep the same course that ever they did, and therefore if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort they have yielded; we must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world.

7. That this world is, at the best, a weary land, *all is vanity*, for all is full of labour; the whole creation is made subject to this vanity, ever since man was sentenced to *eat bread in the sweat of his brow*. If we survey the whole creation we shall see all busy, all have enough to do to mind their own business, none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none a *help-met* for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are, can neither number the laborious, nor measure the labours.

8. That our senses are unsatisfied, and the objects of them unsatisfying. He instanceth in those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased, *The eye is not satisfied with seeing*, but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. *The ear is fond at first of a pleasant song or tune*, but soon nauseates it, and must have another; both are surfeited, but neither satiated, and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still inquisitive, because still unsatisfied, and the more it is humoured the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, *Give, give*.

9. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be: and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and *there is no new thing under the sun*. 10. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11. *There is no remembrance of former things*, neither shall there be *any* remembrance of things that are to come, with *those* that shall come after.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value ourselves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity: and Solomon here shews us our mistake in both.

(1.) The novelty of the invention, that it is such as never was known before: How grateful is the fancy of this, to think that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it as we; such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it as we have. Their contrivances and compositions are all despised and run down, and we boast of new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions which juggle out the old and put them down; but this is all a mistake. *The thing that is and shall be is the same with that which hath been, and that which shall be done will be but the same with that which is done*, for *there is no new thing under the sun*, *ver. 9.* It is repeated *ver. 10.* by way of question, *Is there any thing of which it may be said, with wonder, See, this is new; there never was the like?* It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up the modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and though perhaps we cannot make it appear, for want of the records of former times, yet we have reason to conclude *it has been already of old time, which was before us*. What is there in the kingdom of nature of which we may say, *This is new? the works were finished from the foundation of the world*, Heb. iv. 3. things which appear new to us as they do to children, are

not so in themselves: The heavens were of *old*: The earth abideth for ever: The powers of nature and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were. In the kingdom of providence, though the course and method of it has not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor doth it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again; men's hearts and the corruptions of them, are still the same; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same; and what God doth in his dealings with men is according to the scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not to be so, for there has been the like; the like strange advancements and disappointments; the like strange revolutions and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind treads a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were.

Now the design of this is,

1. To shew the folly of the children of men, both in affecting things that are new, and in imagining that they have light on such things, and pleasing and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna; and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, whereas it is all what has been. Tatianus the Assyrian, shewing the Grecians how all the arts which they valued themselves by owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them; For shame do not call those things *Eupnoies*, inventions, which are but *Μυμησεις*, imitations.

2. To take us off from expecting happiness and satisfaction in the creature: Why should we look for it there, where never any yet have found it? What reason have we to think that the world should be any kinder to us than it has been to those that have gone before us; Since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made. *Your fathers did eat manna, and yet they are dead*. See John viii. 5. 9.

3. To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with new things, we must acquaint ourselves with the things of God, get a new nature, then *old things pass away, and all things become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. The gospel puts *a new song into our mouths*. In heaven all is new, Rev. xxi. 5. all new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed, Luke xx. 35. and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die, that in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

2. The memorableness of the achievement that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have done, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised; that *their houses shall continue for ever*, Psalm xlix. 11. but herein they deceive themselves; How many *former things* and persons were there, which in their day looked very great, and made a mighty figure, and yet *there is no remembrance* of them, they are buried in oblivion? Here and there one person or action that was remarkable met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when, at the same time, there were others no less remarkable that were dropt; and therefore we may conclude, that *neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come*, but that which we hope to be remembered by will either be lost or slighted.

12. ¶ I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: This fore travail hath God given to the sons of man, to be exercised therewith. 14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 15. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. 16. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. 17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.

Solomon having asserted, in general, that *all is vanity*, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it, 1. By his own experience; he tried them all, and found them vanity. 2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all other to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning; if this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so: Now as to this,

(1.) Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of, and that with such advantages, that if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he had found it.

1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics and the conduct of human affairs, *ver. 12.* He that is *the preacher* of this doctrine was king over Israel, whom all their neighbours admired as a *wise and understanding people*. Deut. iv. 6. He had his royal seat in Jerusalem, which then deserved better than Athens ever did to be called the eye of the world. The heart of a king is unsearchable, he has reaches of his own; and many a time a *divine sentence in his lips*: It is his honour, it is his business to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning and the rendezvous of learned men, of furnishing himself with the best of books, and either converting or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade, all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have to say which will instruct others they will have that to say which will instruct us. Some observe how slightly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour; He doth not say, *I the preacher am king*, but *I was king*, no matter what I am: He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory.

2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom, which, though never so great, will not make a man wise, unless he give his mind to it. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out all things to be known by wisdom, *ver. 13.* He made it his business to acquaint himself with *all the things that are done under*

under the sun, that are done by the providence of God, or by the art and prudence of man: He set himself to get all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandize and mechanics, into the history of former ages, and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and politics; into men's different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search, to pry into that which is most intricate, and which requires the closest application of mind, and the most vigorous and constant prosecution: Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, boggled not at its knots, nor took up short of its depths: And this he did not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God and his generation, and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of that knowledge would go towards the settlement and repose of the mind.

3. He made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it, and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun, ver. 14. works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its center; works of art, and the product of men's wit, in a personal or social capacity: He had as much satisfaction in the success of his researches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, *Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom, have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it and bring it into reputation, than any, than all that have been before me in Jerusalem.* Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures: Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge, he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge, as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning, by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them, which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged a competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of notions, but his heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, of the power and benefit of it, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it; what he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of; *Wisdom entered into his heart, and so became pleasant to his soul.* Prov. ii. 10. 11.—xxii. 18.

4. He applied his studies especially to that part of learning which is most serviceable to the conduct of human life, and consequently is the most valuable, ver. 17. *I gave my heart to know the rules and dictates of wisdom, and how I might obtain it; and to know madness and folly, how I might prevent and cure it; to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them, and guard against them, and discover its fallacies.* So industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge, that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men, and by the madness of foolish men; by the field of the slothful, as well as of the diligent.

(2.) He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that all is vanity.

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind, ver. 13. *This fore travail, this difficulty that there is in searching after truth, and finding it, God has given to the sons of men, to be afflicted therewith, as a punishment for our first parents' coveting forbidden knowledge.* As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten in the sweat of our face, whereas both had been had without labour if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw of their vanity; nay, and many times the sight occasioned him vexation of spirit, ver. 14. *I have seen all the works of a world full of business, have observed what the children of men are doing, and behold, whatever men think of their own works, I see, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.* He had before pronounced all vanity, ver. 2. needless and unprofitable, and that which doth us no good; here he adds, it is all vexation of spirit, troublesome and prejudicial, and that which doth us hurt: It is feeding upon wind; so some read it, *Hof. xii. 1.* 1. The works themselves which we see done, are vanity and vexation to those that are employed in them: There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, it is vexation of spirit. 2. The sight of them is vanity and vexation of spirit to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world, the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with weeping eyes. Solomon's especially perceived that the knowledge of wisdom and folly was vexation of spirit, ver. 17. It vexed him to see many that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. When he knew wisdom, it vexed him to see how far it stood from the children of men, and when he saw folly, how fast he saw it bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge, he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others with it, which he expected, ver. 15. It would not avail,

(1.) To redress the many grievances of human life. After all I find, that that which is crooked will be crooked still, and cannot be made straight. Our knowledge is itself intricate and perplexed, we must go far about, and fetch a great compass to come at it: Solomon thought to have found out a nearer way to it, but he could not; the paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and manners of men are crooked and perverse; Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, to have thoroughly reformed his kingdom, and made that straight which he found crooked; but he was disappointed; all the philosophy and politics in the world, will not repress the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them, both in others and in ourselves. Learning will not alter men's natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful distempers; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world; a vale of tears it is, and so it will be, when all is done.

(2.) To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life. That which is wanting there cannot be numbered, or counted out to us from the treasures of human learning, but what is wanting will still be so; all our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and defective, and it cannot be helped; as they are, so they are like to be. That which is wanting in our knowledge is so much, that it cannot be numbered: The more we know, the more we see of our own ignorance. Who can understand his errors, his defects?

4. Upon the whole therefore, he concluded that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners, for in much wisdom is much grief, ver. 18. There must be a great deal of pains taken to get it, and a great deal of care not to forget it; the more we know, the more we see there is to be known, and consequently see our work never at an end; and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions much grief. The more we

see of men's different sentiments and opinions, (and that is it which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right. Those that increase knowledge, have so much the more quick and sensible perception of the calamities of this world, and for one discovery they make that is pleasing, perhaps, they make ten that are displeasing, and so they increase sorrow. Let us not therefore be driven off from the pursuit of any useful knowledge, but put on patience to break through the sorrow of it; but let us despair of finding true happiness in this knowledge, and expect it only in the knowledge of God, and the careful discharge of our duty to him. He that increaseth in heavenly wisdom, and in an experimental acquaintance with the principles, powers, and pleasures, of the spiritual and divine life, increaseth joy, such as will shortly consummate in everlasting joy.

C H A P. II.

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he was so far from giving himself joy of, that he found the increase of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter, he goes on to shew what reason he had to be sick of this world, and with what little reason the most of men are fond of it. 1. He shews, that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth and pleasure, and the delight of sense, ver. 1—11. 2. He reconsiders the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be an excellent useful thing, and yet sees it clogged with such diminutions of its worth, that it proves insufficient to make a man happy, ver. 12—16. 3. He inquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go towards making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that, to those who set their hearts upon it, it is vanity and vexation of spirit, ver. 17—23. and if there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it, ver. 24—26.

1. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. 2. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? 3. I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom) and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven, all the days of their life. 4. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards. 5. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. 6. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. 7. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. 8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces: I gat me men fingers, and women fingers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. 10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was my portion of all my labour. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

Solomon here, in pursuit of the *summum bonum*, the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his laboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the play-house, his garden and his summer-house; exchangeth the company of the philosophers and grave senators, for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux-esprits of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction, and happiness among them: Here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect, to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

(1.) He resolved to try what mirth would do, and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls and blunders, and foolish things he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always upon the merry pin.

Here is, 1. This experiment made, ver. 1. Finding that in much wisdom is much grief, and that those that are serious are apt to be melancholy, I said in my heart, i. e. to my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, I will try if that will give thee satisfaction; neither the temper of his mind, nor his outward condition, had any thing in them to keep him from being merry, but both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it, therefore he resolved to take a lease this way, and said, *Enjoy pleasure, and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry; so a man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with; many that are poor are very merry; beggars in a barn are so to a proverb; mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual; some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as animal rationale, but as animal risibile; therefore he that said to his soul, Take thine ease, eat and drink, added, and be merry, for it was in order to that he would eat and drink.* Try therefore, saith Solomon, to laugh and be fat; laugh and be happy.

2. The judgment he passed upon this experiment: Behold this also is vanity, like all the rest, it yields no true satisfaction, ver. 2. I said presently, of laughter, It is mad, or Thou art mad, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; and of mirth, (of all sports and recreations, and whatever

whatever pretends to be divine (*thing*) *What doth it?* or *What doth thou?* Inebriant mirth, soberly and seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing; fits for business, and helps to lessen the toils and chagrins of human life; but when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. 1. It doth no good; *What doth it?* *Qui bono?* It will not avail to quiet a giddy conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing more ungateful than *singing songs to a heavy heart*: it will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content: It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time: Great laughter commonly end in a sigh. 2. It doth a great deal of hurt; it is mad, i. e. makes men mad, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it. For it estrangeth the heart from God and divine things, and intently eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and while they take the tumbrel and harp, they *joy to the Almighty, Depart from us*, Job xxi. 12-14. We may, as Solomon, *proove ourselves with mirth*, and judge of the state of our souls by this; How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wife? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food; but we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for, we may take his word for it, *it is mad*; and *What doth it?* Laughter and pleasure (saith Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for as men have no disposition to laugh at those things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

(2.) Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try what would please the palate, ver. 3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do. *I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine*, i. e. to good meat and good drink; many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, nor looking any farther than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man; critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe,

1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tired himself with his severe studies; till his *increase of wisdom* proved an *increase of sorrow*, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good, we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty; then the delights of sense are rightly used, when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his *health's sake*, 1 Tim. v. 23. *I thought to draw my flesh with wine*, so the margin reads it, or *to wine*: Those that have addicted themselves to drinking, did at first put a force upon themselves, they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves.

2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul when he commended himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be borne with in his *folly*, 2 Cor. xi. 1. He sought to lay hold on folly, i. e. to see the utmost that the folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest (as we say) too far: He relished the folly should not take hold of him, nor get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance, yet he found it too hard for him.

3. He took care at the same time to *acquaint himself with wisdom*, i. e. to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so as that they should not do him any prejudice, nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them: When he *drew his flesh with wine*, he *led his heart with wisdom*, so the word is; kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a sot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were soils to each other, and he tried, whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it *vain*; for they that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will perhaps deceive themselves as much as they do that think to serve God and mammon. *Wine is a mocker*, it is a great cheat, and it will be impossible for any man to lay, thus far he will give himself to it, and no further.

4. That which he aimed at, was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe, the description he gives of man's happiness; it is *that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days*. 1. That which we are to enquire after, is not so much the good we must have, we may leave that to God, but the good we must do, that ought to be our care. *Good Master, what good thing shall I do?* Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing aright, in being well employed. If we do that which is good, no doubt we shall have comfort and *praise of the same*. 2. It is good to be done *under the heaven*, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts; this is our state of work and service, it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution, thither our works will follow us. 3. It is to be done *all the days of our life*; the good we are to do we must preserve in the doing of to the end, while our doing time lasts; *the number of the days of our life*, so it is in the margin; the days of our life are numbered to us by him in whose hand our times are, and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine; in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here in the reflection condemns himself for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very ill.

(3.) Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income, the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour, and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country, and having been at such vast expence in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself: he began his work at the right end, Matt. vi. 33. not as the people, *They build to their own houses* while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building he had the pleasure of employing the poor, and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings, 1 Kings 15, 17, 18, 19. and they were all *great works*, such as became his purle and spirit and great dignity. See his mistake; he enquired after the *good works* he should do, ver. 3. and, in pursuit of the enquiry, applied himself to *great works*: Good works indeed are truly *great*, but there are many that are reputed *great works* which are far from being *good*; wondrous works, which are not *gracious*, Matt. vii. 22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building; he *planted him vineyards*, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he *made him fine gardens and orchards*, ver. 5. and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now; he had not only forests of timber-trees, but *trees of all kinds of fruits*, which he himself had planted; and if any worldly business would yield a man

happiness, sure it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocency.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in water-works, ponds and canals; not for sport and diversion, but for use, *to water the wood that brings forth trees*, ver. 6. he not only planted but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. *Springs of water* are great *blessings*, Job. xv. 19. but where nature has provided them, art must direct them to make them serviceable, Prov. xxi. 1.

4. He increased his family: When he proposed to himself to do *great works*, he must employ many hands, and therefore procured *servants and maidens*, which were bought with his money, and of these he had *servants born in his house*, ver. 7. Thus his retinue was enlarged, and his court appeared more magnificent. See Ezra ii. 58.

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it, either by his studies or by his pleasures: He had *large possessions of great and small cattle*, herds and flocks, as his father had before him, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 38. and not forgetting that his father in the beginning was the keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle, neither despise their employment, nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having *possession of cattle* among his *great works* and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening, as many are, who for that reason only repent it, and call it *vainity and vexation*. Solomon scattered and yet increased: He filled his exchequer with *silver and gold*, and which did not stagnate there, but was made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made *silver to be in Jerusalem as stones*, 1 Kings x. 27. nay, he had the *Segullah*, the *peculiar treasure of kings*, and of provinces, which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than *silver and gold*: The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour, and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting; all sorts of melody and music, vocal and instrumental, *men-fingers and women-fingers*, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and hand instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion than the son, who made it more his diversion. These are called *the delights of the sons of men*; for the gratification of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, and spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was in this respect *great*, and *increased more than all that ever were before him*, that he was both a wife man and a sportsman: It was strange, and the like was never met with.

(1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience: In the midst of these entertainments *his wisdom remained with him*, ver. 9. In the midst of these childish delights he preserved his spirits manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he, that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been by this course of life! But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites, presuming that they may do that and yet retain their wisdom, because they have not such a strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived, for how did *his wisdom remain with him*, when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far *his wisdom remained with him*, that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making a judgment of them: He went over into the enemy's country, not as a deserter but as a *spy*, to discover the *nakedness of their land*.

(2.) Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, ver. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter, that if *his wisdom remained with him*, he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it: yea, saith he, I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for *whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them*, if it could be compassed by lawful means, though never so difficult or costly; and as *I withheld not any joy from my heart* that I had a mind to, so *I withheld not my heart from any joy*, but, with a *non obstante* to my wisdom, I had as high a gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever any picture did, nor was there any thing either in the circumstances of his condition, or in the temper of his spirit, to sour and embitter them, or give them an alloy. In short, 1. He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had: *My heart rejoiced in all my labour*: so that the toil and fatigue of that was no damp to his pleasures. 2. He had no less profit in his business, he met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance; *this was my portion of all my labour*: He had this added to all the rest of his pleasures, that in them he did not only see but eat the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, for indeed it was all he could expect from his labour: It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of business; so that, upon the whole matter, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

Lastly, We have at length the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, ver. 11. When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and *behold, all was very good*, every thing pleased him; but when Solomon reviewed *all the works that his hands had wrought*, with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do, in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectations; *behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit*, he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; *there was no profit under the sun*, neither by the employments, nor by the enjoyments of this world.

12. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man do that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done. 13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14. The wise man's eyes *are* in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also, that one event happeneth to them all. 15. Then said I, in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then *more* wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity. 16. For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the

the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is*, in the days to come shall be forgotten: and how dieth the wife *man*? as the fool.

Solomon having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put both together, he here compares them one with another, and passeth a judgment upon them.

1. He sets himself both to consider wisdom and folly. He had considered these before, *chap. i. 17.* but lest it should be thought he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second view and second thoughts, he could gain more satisfaction in the search than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures, and as nauseating them he turned from them, that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if upon this re-hearing of the cause the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive: *for what can the man do that comes after the king?* especially such a king that had so much of this world to make the experiment upon, and so much wisdom to make it with. The baffled trial need not to be repeated; no man can expect to find more satisfaction of the world than Solomon did, nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality; when a man has done what he can, still it is *that which hath been already done.* Let us learn, (1.) Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us; let us *esteem others better than ourselves*, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours, and rather own how much we are beholden to them, *John iv. 37, 38.* (2.) To acquiesce in Solomon's judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had to make the experiment, nor of being able to make it with an equal application of the mind, and so little danger to ourselves.

2. He gives the preference to wisdom far before folly; let none mistake him, as if when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write (as a great wit once did) *Encomium morie, panegyric in praise of folly*; no, he is maintaining sacred truths, and therefore is careful to guard against being misunderstood: I soon saw (said he) *that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly*, as much as there is in light above darkness. The pleasures of wisdom, though they suffice not to make men happy, yet they vastly transcend the pleasure of wine. Wisdom enlightens the soul with surprising discoveries, and necessary directions for the right government of itself: but sensuality (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it, it put out men's eyes, makes them to stumble in the way, and wander out of it. Or though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy, St. Paul shews a *more excellent way* than gifts, and that is grace; yet it is much better to have it than be without it, in respect of our present safety, comfort, and usefulness; for *the wife man's eyes are in his head*; ver. 14. where they should be ready to discover both the dangers that are to be avoided, and the advantages that are to be improved; a wife man has not his reason to seek when he should use it, but looks about him and is quick-sighted, knows both where to step and where to stop; whereas *the fool walks in darkness*, and is ever and anon either at a loss or at a lunge, either bewildered that he knows not which way to go, or embarrassed that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considerate has the command of the business, and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is, rash and ignorant and foolish, is continually making blunders, running upon one precipice or other, his projects, his bargains are all foolish, and ruin his affairs. Therefore *get wisdom, get understanding.*

3. Yet he maintains that, in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage, for,

1. Wise men and fools fare alike. It is true, the wife man has very much the advantage of the fool in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success, that *I myself perceived*, by my own experience, that *one event happeneth to them all*, ver. 14. those that are most cautious of their health are as soon sick as those that are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon. David had observed that *wise men die*, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, *Psal. xlix. 12.* See *Ecc. ix. 11.* Nay, it has of old been observed, that *fortune favours fools*, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the greatest projectors forecast work for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword, devours wife men and fools.

Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself, ver. 15. that though he was a wife man he might not glory in his wisdom. *I said to my heart*, when he began to be proud or secure, *as it happens to the fool so it happens to me, even me*; for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original, *so as for me*, it happens to be. Am I rich? so is many a Nabal that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick, doth he get a fall? so do I, *even I*; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security; *And why was I then more wise?* Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when as to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? Then I said in my heart, *that this also is vanity.* Some make this a correction of what was said before, like that *Psal. lxxvii. 10.* *I said this is my infirmity*; it is my folly to think that wife men and fools are upon a level; but really they seem to be so in respect to the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said, That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician, and yet not be a happy man.

2. Wife men and fools are forgotten alike, ver. 16. *There is no remembrance of the wife more than of the fool.* It is promised to the righteous, that they shall be laid in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of the world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven; and otherwise the names of this world's wife men are written with those of its fools, in the dust: *That which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten.* What was much talked of in one generation, is in the next as if it had never been. New persons and new things juggle out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt, and at length quite buried in oblivion. *Where is the wife? Where is the disputer of this world?* 1 Cor. i. 20. And it is upon this account that he asks, *How dies the wife man? as the fool*; between the death of the godly and wicked man there is great difference, but not between the death of a wife man and a fool; the fool is buried and forgotten, *Ecc. viii. 10.* and no one remembered the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city, *Ecc. xi. 18.* so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness: and wife and learned men, when they have been a while there out of sight, presently grow out of mind, a new generation ariseth that knew them not.

17. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is

vanity and vexation of spirit. 18. ¶ Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wife man or a fool: Yet he shall have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wife under the sun. This is also vanity. 20. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom and in knowledge and in equity: yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil. 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the sun. 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. 24. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. 25. For who can eat, or who else can harken hereunto, more than I? 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wife men have a pleasure in; they are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business; they may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off: here therefore one would expect to have found the good that man should do, but Solomon tried this too; after a contemplative life, and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other, till it is all *vanity and vexation of spirit*; of which he gives an account in these verses. Where observe,

1. What the business was which he made trial of; it was business *under the sun*, ver. 17, 18, 19, 20. about the things of this world, sublunary things, the riches, honours and pleasures of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business *above the sun*, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness; what we do in conformity to that business, doing *God's will as it is done in heaven*, and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account, we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it: but it is *labour under the sun*, labour for the *meat that perisheth*, John vi. 27. Isa. lv. 2. that Solomon here speaks with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the *hewers of wood, and drawers of water*, it is not so strange if men hate all that labour, but it was *in wisdom and knowledge and equity*, ver. 21. It was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom, and the advancements of its interests. It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice; it was labour at the council-board and in the courts of justice; was labour wherein he *showed himself wife*, ver. 19. which as much excels the labour wherein men only shew themselves strong, as the endowments of the mind by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body which he have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the persecution of their worldly business is to *show themselves wife*, to get the reputation of ingenious men, and men of sense and application.

2. His falling out with this business: he presently grew sick of it. (1.) He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected: after he had his fine houses and gardens and water-works a-while, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children that are eager for a toy, and fond of it at first, but when they have played with it a-while are weary of it and throw it away, and must have another. This speaks not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion, *Luke xiv. 20.* not a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it: but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them, and a sense of disappointment in them. (2.) He caused his heart to despair of all his labour, ver. 20, i. e. he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature, we must go about, must fetch a compass in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest, and despair of ever finding it? (1.) He came to that at length, that he hated life itself, ver. 17. because it is subject to so many toils and toils, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfied nature of all the things of this life, and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burden to a man of business.

3. The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them.

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself: the work that he had wrought under the sun was grievous unto him; ver. 17. His thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it, was a burden and a fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed, Gen. v. 29. and of the weakening of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Our labour is called the vexation of our heart, ver. 22 it is to molest a force upon themselves, so natural it is to us to love our ease. A man of business is described to be uneasy both in his going out, and his coming in, ver. 23. (1.) He is deprived of his pleasure by day, for all his days are sorrows, not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, nay,

many

whatever pretends to be diverting) *What doth it?* or *What doest thou?* Innocent mirth, soberly and seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for business, and helps to lighten the toils and chagrins of human life; but when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. 1. It doth no good; *What doth it?* *Qui bono?* It will not avail to quiet a giddy conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing more ungrateful than *singing songs to a heavy heart*: it will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content: It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time: Great laughter commonly end in a sigh. 2. It doth a great deal of hurt; it is mad, i. e. makes men mad. It transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it. For it estrangeth the heart from God and divine things, and insensibly eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and while they take the timbrel and harp, they say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, Job xxi. 12-14. We may, as Solomon, *prove ourselves with mirth*, and judge of the state of our souls by this; How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food; but we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for, we may take his word for it, it is mad; and *What doth it?* Laughter and pleasure (saith Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for as men have no disposition to laugh at those things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

(2.) Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try what would please the palate, ver. 3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do. *I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine*, i. e. to good meat and good drink; many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, nor looking any farther than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man; critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe;

1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tired himself with his severe studies; till his *increase of wisdom* proved an *increase of sorrow*, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good, we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty; then the delights of sense are rightly used, when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his *health's sake*, 1 Tim. v. 23. *I thought to draw my flesh with wine*, so the margin reads it, or to wine: Those that have addicted themselves to drinking, did at first put a force upon themselves, they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves.

2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul when he commended himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be borne with in his *foolishness*, 2. Cor. xi. 1. He sought to lay hold on folly, i. e. to see the utmost that the folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest (as we say) too far: He resolved the folly should not take hold of him, nor get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance, yet he found it too hard for him.

3. He took care at the same time to acquaint himself with wisdom, i. e. to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so as that they should not do him any prejudice, nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them: When he *drew his flesh with wine*, he *led his heart with wisdom*, so the word is; kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a lot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried, whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it vanity; for they that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will perhaps deceive themselves as much as they do that think to serve God and mammon. *Wine is a mocker*, it is a great cheat, and it will be impossible for any man to say, thus far he will give himself to it, and no further.

4. That which he aimed at, was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe, the description he gives of man's happiness; it is that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days. 1. That which we are to enquire after, is not so much the good we must have, we may leave that to God, but the good we must do, that ought to be our care. *Good Master, what good thing shall I do?* Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing aright, in being well employed. If we do that which is good, no doubt we shall have comfort and praise of the same. 2. It is good to be done under the heaven, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts; this is our state of work and service, it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution, thither our works will follow us. 3. It is to be done all the days of our life; the good we are to do we must preserve in the doing of to the end, while our doing time lasts; *the number of the days of our life*, so it is in the margin; the days of our life are numbered to us by him in whose hand our times are, and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine; in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here in the reflection condemns himself for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very ill.

(3.) Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income, the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour, and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country, and having been at such vast expence in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself: he began his work at the right end, Matt. vi. 33. not as the people, Hag. i. 4. that *rebuilded their own houses* while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building he had the pleasure of employing the poor, and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings, 1 Kings 15, 17, 18, 19, and they were all great works, such as became his purse and spirit and great dignity. See his mistake; he enquired after the good works he should do, ver. 3. and, in pursuit of the enquiry, applied himself to great works: Good works indeed are truly great, but there are many that are reputed great works which are far from being good; wondrous works, which are not gracious, Matt. vii. 22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building; he *planted him vineyards*, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he *made him fine gardens and orchards*, ver. 9. and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now; he had not only forests of timber-trees, but *trees of all kinds of fruits*, which he himself had planted; and if any worldly business would yield a man

happiness, sure it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocency.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in water-works, ponds and canals; not for sport and diversion, but for use, to water the wood that brings forth trees, ver. 6. he not only planted but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. Springs of water are great blessings, Josh. xv. 19. but where nature has provided them, art must direct them to make them serviceable, Prov. xxi. 1.

4. He increased his family: When he proposed to himself to do great works, he must employ many hands, and therefore procured servants and maidens, which were bought with his money, and of these he had servants born in his house, ver. 7. Thus his retinue was enlarged, and his court appeared more magnificent. See Ezra ii. 58.

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it, either by his studies or by his pleasures: He had large possessions of great and small cattle, herds and flocks, as his father had before him, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 38. and not forgetting that his father in the beginning was the keeper of the sheep. Let those that deal in cattle, neither despise their employment, nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having possession of cattle among his great works and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all improveished by his building and gardening, as many are, who for that reason only repent it, and call it vanity and vexation. Solomon scattered and yet increased: He filled his exchequer with silver and gold, and which did not stagnate there, but was made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, 1 Kings x. 27. nay, he had the *Segullah*, the peculiar treasure of kings, and of provinces, which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than silver and gold: The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour, and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting; all sorts of melody and music, vocal and instrumental, men-singers and women-singers, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and hand instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion than the son, who made it more his diversion. These are called the delights of the sons of men; for the gratification of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, and spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was in this respect great, and increased more than all that ever were before him, that he was both a wise man and a sportsman: It was strange, and the like was never met with.

(1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience: In the midst of these entertainments his wisdom remained with him, ver. 9. In the midst of these childish delights he preserved his spirits manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he, that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been by this course of life! But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites, presuming that they may do that and yet retain their wisdom, because they have not such a strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived, for how did his wisdom remain with him, when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far his wisdom remained with him, that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making a judgment of them: He went over into the enemy's country, not as a deserter but as a spy, to discover the nakedness of their land.

(2.) Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, ver. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter, that if his wisdom remained with him, he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it: yea, saith he, I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for *whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them*, if it could be compassed by lawful means, though never so difficult or costly; and as *I withheld not any joy from my heart* that I had a mind to; so *I withheld not my heart from any joy*, but, with a *non obstante* to my wisdom, I had as high a gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever any Epicure did, nor was there any thing either in the circumstances of his condition, or in the temper of his spirit, to sour and embitter them, or give them an alloy. In short, 1. He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had: *My heart rejoiced in all my labour*: so that the toil and fatigue of that was no damp to his pleasures. 2. He had no less profit in his business, he met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance; *this was my portion of all my labour*: He had this added to all the rest of his pleasures, that in them he did not only see but eat the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, for indeed it was all he could expect from his labour: It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of business; so that, upon the whole matter, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

Lastly, We have at length the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, ver. 11. When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and beheld, all was very good, every thing pleased him; but when Solomon reviewed all the works that his hands had wrought, with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do, in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectations; behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; there was no profit under the sun, neither by the employments, nor by the enjoyments of this world.

12. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. 13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also, that one event happeneth to them all. 15. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. 16. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the

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3. Yet he maintains that, in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage, for,

1. Wife men and fools fare alike. It is true, the wife man has very much the advantage of the fool in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success, that *I myself perceived*, by my own experience, that *one event happeneth to them all*, ver. 14. those that are most cautious of their health are as soon sick as those that are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon. David had observed that *wife men die*, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, *Psal. xlix. 12.* See *Ecc. ix. 11.* Nay, it has of old been observed, that *fortune favours fools*, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the greatest projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword, devours wife men and fools.

Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself, ver. 15. that though he was a wife man he might not glory in his wisdom. *I said to my heart*, when he began to be proud or secure, *as it happens to the fool so it happens to me, even me*; for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original, *so as for me*, it happens to be. Am I rich? so is many a Nabal that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick, doth he get a fall? so do I, *even I*; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security; *And why was I then more wise?* Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when as to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? Then I said in my heart, *that this also is vanity.* Some make this a correction of what was said before, like that *Psal. lxxvii. 10.* *I said this is my infirmity*; it is my folly to think that wife men and fools are upon a level; but really they seem to be so in respect to the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said, That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician, and yet not be a happy man.

2. Wife men and fools are forgotten alike, ver. 16. *There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool.* It is promised to the righteous, that they shall be laid in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of the world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven; and otherwise the names of this world's wife men are written with those of its fools, in the dust: *That which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten.* What was much talked of in one generation, is in the next as if it had never been. New persons and new things juggle out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt, and at length quite buried in oblivion. *Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world?* 1 Cor. i. 20. And it is upon this account that he asks, *How dieth the wife man? as the fool*; between the death of the godly and wicked man there is great difference, but not between the death of a wife man and a fool; the fool is buried and forgotten, *Ecc. viii. 10.* and no one remembereth the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city, *Ecc. xi. 18.* so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; and wife and learned men, when they have been a while there out of sight, presently grow out of mind, a new generation miseth that knows them not.

17. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is

vanity and vexation of spirit. 18. ¶ Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wife man or a fool: Yet he shall have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wife under the sun. This is also vanity. 20. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom and in knowledge and in equity: yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil. 22. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the sun. 23. For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. 24. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. 25. For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I? 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wife men have a pleasure in; they are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business; they may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off: here therefore one would expect to have found the good that men should do, but Solomon tried this too; after a contemplative life, and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other, still it is all *vanity and vexation of spirit*; of which he gives an account in these verses. Where observe,

1. What the business was which he made trial of; it was business *under the sun*, ver. 17, 18, 19, 20. about the things of this world, sublunary things, the riches, honours and pleasures of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business *above the sun*, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness; what we do in conformity to that business, doing *God's will as it is done in heaven*, and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account, we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it: but it is *labour under the sun*, labour for the meat that *perisheth*, *John vi. 27.* *Mat. iv. 2.* that Solomon here speaks with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the *hewers of wood, and drawers of water*, it is not so strange if men hate all that labour, but it was *in wisdom and knowledge and equity*, ver. 21. It was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom, and the advancements of its interests. It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice; it was labour at the council-board and in the courts of justice; was labour wherein he *shewed himself wise*, ver. 19. which as much excels the labour wherein men only shew themselves strong, as the endowments of the mind by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body which he have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business is to *shew themselves wise*, to get the reputation of ingenious men, and men of sense and application.

2. His falling out with this business: he presently grew sick of it. (1.) He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected: after he had his fine houses and gardens and water-works a-while, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children that are eager for a toy, and fond of it at first, but when they have played with it a-while are weary of it and throw it away, and must have another. This speaks not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion, *Luke xiv. 20.* not a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it: but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them, and a sense of disappointment in them. (2.) He caused his heart to despair of all his labour, ver. 20, i. e. he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature, we must go about, must fetch a compass in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest, and despair of ever finding it? (1.) He came to that at length, that he hated life itself, ver. 17. because it is subject to so many toils and toiles, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfied nature of all the things of this life, and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burden to a man of business.

3. The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them.

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself: the work that he had wrought under the sun was grievous unto him, ver. 17. His thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it, was a burden and a fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be *the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed*, *Gen. v. 29.* and of the weakening of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Our labour is called *the vexation of our heart*, ver. 22 it is to molest a force upon themselves, so natural it is to us to love our ease. A man of business is described to be uneasy both in his going out, and his coming in, ver. 23. (1.) He is deprived of his pleasure by day, for all his days are sorrows, not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, many

many sorrows and various; his travail or labour all day is grief; men of business ever and anon meet with that which vexeth them, and is an occasion of anger or sorrow to them: They are apt to fret; the more dealings they have in the world, the oftener they are made to fret. The world is a *vale of tears*, even to those that have much of it. They that labour are said to be *heavy laden*, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, *Matt. xi. 28.* (2.) He is disturbed in his repose by night: When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there; cares hold his eyes waking, or if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and that taketh no rest in the night. See what fools they are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their rest; night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that, upon the whole matter, it is *all vanity*, ver. 17. This is *vanity* in particular, ver. 19, 23, nay, it is *vanity and a great evil*, ver. 21. It is a great affront to God and great injury to themselves, therefore a *great evil*: and a vain thing, *to rise up early, and sit up late* in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must be all left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action, and the spur of industry, therefore men labour, because they hope to gain by it; if the hopes fail the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.

(1.) He must leave them. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them, *Job vii. 10.* nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, *Luke xvi. 25.* But I must leave all to the man that shall come after me, to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us who built the houses we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us who shall live in the houses we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir: to a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others a turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased, that when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved self behind, to I know not who.

(2.) He must leave them to those who would never have taken so much pains by them, and will thereby excuse him from taking any pains. He that raised the estate did it by *labouring in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity*; but he that enjoys it and spends it (it may be) *hath not laboured therein*, ver. 21, and, more than that, never will; the bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare to him; it is left him for his portion, which he rests and takes up with; and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion. Whereas, if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it.

(3.) He knows not who he must leave it to (for God makes heirs) or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it, whether a wife man or a fool, a wife man that will make it more, or a fool that will bring it to nothing? yet he shall have rule over all my labour, and foolishly undo all that which his father wisely did. It is likely Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St. Jerom, in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shewn himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall, perhaps into the hands of a fool, who according to the perverseness of his heart, makes an ill use of what was well written. So that upon the whole matter he asks, ver. 22. *What has man of all his labour?* What has he to himself and to his own use? What has he that will go with him into another world?

The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world; and that is to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it, and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, ver. 21, 25, 26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things, as to that they are *vanity*, and if happiness be expected from them, the disappointment will be *vexation of spirit*; but he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed. (1.) We must not over-toil ourselves, so as in pursuit of more to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have. (2.) We must not over-board for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have, to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe,

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the farthest we can go to rescue it from its *vanity* and the *vexation* that is in it.

(1.) We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well for the ends for which we were intrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated, ver. 26, where those only are said to have the comfort of this life that are good in God's sight; and again, *good before God*, truly good, as Noah, whom God saw righteous before him. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, That a man should make his soul to enjoy good, by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in the ways that are right before him; and ver. 25, by studying the words of the law, and being in awe about the day of the great judgment that is to come.

(2.) We must take the comfort of them. Those things will not make a happiness for the soul, all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul, and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to good account. There is therefore nothing better for a man as to those things, than to allow himself a sober, cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition is, have meat and drink of them for himself, his family, his friends, and so delight his senses and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; and not lose that in pursuit of that good that is not to be had out of them. But observe, He would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may eat and drink; no, we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in our worldly business.

(3.) We must herein acknowledge God, we must see that it is from the hand of God, i. e. (1.) The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish that, and are thankful for it. (2.) A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he gives us wisdom to make a right use of what he has in his providence bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

Why we should have this in our eye in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it.

(1.) Because Solomon himself with all his possessions could aim at no more, and desire no better, ver. 25. *Who can hasten to this more than I?* This is that which I was ambitious of, I wished for no more, and those that have but little in comparison with what I have may attain to this, to be content with what they have, and enjoy the good of it. Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God, and pray to him for it.

(2.) Because riches are a blessing or a curse to a man, according as he has or has not a heart to make use of them.

1. God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him *wisdom and knowledge, and joy*, to enjoy them cheerfully himself, and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are good in God's sight, that are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God, and have a tender concern for all mankind, God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come; so the Chaldee. Or, he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.

2. He makes them a punishment to an ill man, if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: To the sinner God gives travail, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, to gather and keep up that, which as to himself will not only burden him like thick clay, *Hab. ii. 6.* but be a witness against him, and eat his flesh as if it were fire, *Jam. v. iii.* while God designs by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is good before him; for the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will pity the poor, Note, 1. That godliness with contentment is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in God's sight, and that have it from him and in him.

2. Ungodliness is commonly punishment with discontent, and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. 3. That when God gives abundance to wicked men, it is with design to force them to a resignation to his own children, when they are of age, and ready for it; as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it.—Lastly, the burden of the song is still the same, *This is also vanity, and vexation of spirit.* It is vanity at the best, even to the good man, when he has all that the sinner has scraped together, it will not make him happy without something else; but it is *vexation of spirit* to the sinner to see what he had laid up, enjoyed by him that is good in God's sight, and therefore evil in his. So that take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

C H A P. III.

Solomon having shewed the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found either in the schools of the learned, or in the gardens of Epicurus, or upon the exchange, he proceeds in this chapter farther to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, that therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of what God had given us, by shewing, (1.) The mutability of all human affairs, ver. 1—10. (2.) The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them, and the unsearchableness of those counsels, ver. 11—15. (3.) The vanity of worldly honour and power, which is abused for the support of oppression and persecution, if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of it, ver. 16. And for a check to proud oppressors, and to shew them their vanity, he minds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world, ver. 17. 2. That their condition in reference to this world (for of that he speaks) is no better than that of the brutes, ver. 18—21. And therefore he concludes, that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

1. **T**O every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2. A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted: 3. A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up: 4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance: 5. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing. 6. A time to get, and a time to lose: a time to keep, and a time to cast away: 7. A time to rent, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak: 8. A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace. 9. What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth? 10. I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it.

The scope of these verses is to shew,

1. That we live in a world of changes. That the several events of time and conditions of human life are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them; as in the revolutions of every day and every year. It is the wheel of nature, *Jam. iii. 6.* sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and by and by the contrary, ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other doth the *subjection of this world change*, ever did, and ever will.

2. The very change concerning us, and the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy and not yet secure; not secure because we live in a world of changes, and therefore have no reason to say that *to-morrow shall be as this day*; the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains; and yet to be easy, and as he had advised, *chap. ii. 24.* to enjoy the good of our labour, in humble dependence upon God and his providence; neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here is,

(1.) A general proposition laid down, that to every thing there is season, ver.

ver. 1. *i. e.* 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other, yet in the revelation of affairs will each take their turn and come in play. The day will give place to the night, and the night again to the day. Is it summer? it will be winter: Is it winter? stay a while and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *post gaudia luctus*; and the most clouded sky will clear up, *post nubila Phœbus*. 2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent, yet in the counsel and foreknowledge of God are punctually determined, and the very hour of them fixed, which can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

(2.) The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change; some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man; but all are determined by the divine counsel: every thing under heaven is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

1. *There is a time to be born, and a time to die*; these are determined by the divine counsel; and as we were born, so we must die at the time appointed, *Act. xvii. 26*. Some observe that here is *a time to be born, and a time to die*, but no time to live, that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die: but as there is *a time to be born, and a time to die*, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when they that lie in the grave shall be remembered, *Job xiv. 13*.

2. *A time for God to plant a nation*, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, *to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there*, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, *to pluck up and to destroy* when the measure of their iniquity was full, *Jer. xviii. 7—9*. *There is a time for men to plant*, a time of the year, a time of their lives, but when *that which was planted* is grown fruitless and useless, *it is time to pluck it up*.

3. *A time to kill*, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land, and lay all waste; but when he returns in ways of mercy, then is *a time to heal what he has torn*, *Hof. vi. i. 2*. to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, *Psal. xc. 15*. *There is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives*.

4. *A time to break down a family, an estate, a kingdom*, when it has ripened itself for destruction, but God will find *a time*, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down: there is *a time*, a set time for the Lord *to build up Zion*, *Psal. cii. 13—16*. *There is a time for men to break up house and break off trade, and so to break down*, which they that are busy building up both must expect and prepare for.

5. *A time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn*, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in the times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd *to laugh and dance*, and make merry, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13*. *Ezek. xxi. 10*. but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, *a time to laugh and dance*, and then he expects we should *serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first *sow in tears*, and then *reap in joy*.

6. *A time to cast away stones*, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is *a time to gather stones together*, for the making of strong holds, *ver. 5*. *A time for old towers to fall*, as that in Siloam, *Luke xiii. 4*. and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that *not one stone should be left upon another*; but also a time for trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. *A time to embrace a friend*, when we find him faithful, but *a time to refrain from embracing*, when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by *1 Cor. vii. 3, 4, 5*. *Joel ii. 16*.

8. *A time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains, and a good interest*, when opportunity smiles; a time when a wise man will *seek* (so the word is) when he is setting out in the world and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he has good hits and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy, and make hay when the sun shines. *There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace*, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn: *Nay*, there will come *a time to lose*, when what has been got fast will be scattered as fast, and cannot be held fast.

9. *A time to keep*, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without turning the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come *a time to cast away*, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it, *Math. x. 37, 38*. and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; *nay*, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. *A time to rend the garments*, as upon the occasion of some great grief, and *a time to sew them again*, in token that the grief is over: a time to undo what we have done, and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerom applies it to the rending of the Jewish church, and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

11. *A time when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty to keep silence*, when it is an *evil time*, *Amos v. 13*. when our speaking would be the *casting of pearls before swine*, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss, *Psal. xxxix. 2*, but there is also *a time to speak* for the glory of God, and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation: and it is a great part of christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

12. *A time to love*, and shew ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come *a time to hate*, when we shall cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for suspicion, which love is loth to admit.

Lastly, *A time of war*, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour; when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights: when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for *a time of peace*, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed, and he shall *make wars to cease*, *Psal. xlii. 9*. when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God hath set the one over against the other, that we may *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not*.

(3.) The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance, *ver. 9*. *What profit hath he that worketh?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves, or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

2. Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it: There is indeed *no profit in that wherein we labour*, the thing itself when we have it will do us little good; but if we make a right use of the disposals of providence about it, there will be profit in that, *ver. 10*. *I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men*, not to make up a happiness by it, but *to be exercised in it*, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both *how to want and how to abound*, *Phil. iv. 12*. Note, 1. There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men; labour and sorrow fill the world. 2. This toil and trouble is what God hath allotted us; he never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it. 3. To many it proves a gift; God gives it men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given us to make us weary of the world, and desirous of the remaining rest. 4. It is given us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about, than about the event.

11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. 14. I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. 15. That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here he shews the hand of God in all those changes, it is he that has made every creature to be that to us that it is, and therefore we must have our eye always up unto him.

1. We must make the best of *that which is*, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it. *He has made every thing very beautiful in his time*, *ver. 11*. and therefore while its time lasts we must be reconciled to it; nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he has appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. 2. That which to us seems most unpleasant, yet in its proper time is decent enough. Cold is as becoming in winter, as heat in summer; and the night in its turn is a black beauty, as the day in its turn is a bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the divine providence, and all its disposals; so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God, and the comfort of those that trust in him: Though we see not the complete beauty of providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished; then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time, and it will be the wonder of eternity. *Deut. xxxii. 4*. *Ezek. i. 18*.

2. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God hath made all beautiful, every thing is done well, as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either, but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them, then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels; nor to the end of them, which crowns the action, then we should see the product to be glorious; but we must expect till the veil be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings, nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us*.

Those words, *He hath set the world in their hearts*, are differently understood. 1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble, "God hath not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but hath set it forth to be observed in the book of the world, and this he hath set in men's hearts, i. e. given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs, so that if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance."

2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; so Bishop Reynolds, "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them." The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

3. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. *There is no certain, lasting good in these things*, what good there is in them we are here told, *ver. 12, 13*. We must make a good use of them,

(1.) For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them, is to do good with them, to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests: What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake, if we think we were born for ourselves, no, it is our business to do good, it is in that that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up, and will turn to the best account. Observe, it is to do good

many sorrows and various; his travail or labour all day is grief; men of business even and an in merit with that which vexeth them, and is an occasion of anger or sorrow to them: They are apt to fret; the more dealings they have in the world, the oftener they are made to fret. The world is a *place of tears*, even to those that have much of it. They that labour are said to be *heavy laden*, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, *Matt. xi. 28.* (2.) He is disturbed in his repose by night: When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there; *care hold his eyes waking*, or if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and *that taketh no rest in the night.* See what foils they are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their ally: night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that, upon the whole matter, it is *all vanity*, ver. 17. *This is vanity* in particular, ver. 19, 23, nay, it is *vanity and a great evil*, ver. 21. It is a great affront to God and great injury to themselves, therefore a *great evil*: and a vain thing, *to rise up early, and sit up late* in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must be all left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action, and the spur of industry, therefore men labour, because they hope to gain by it; if the hopes fail the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.

(1.) He must leave them. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them, *Job vii. 10.* nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, *Luke xvi. 25.* But I must leave all to the man that shall come after me, to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us who built the houses we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us who shall live in the houses we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir: to a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others a turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased, that when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved self behind, to I know not who.

(2.) He must leave them to those who would never have taken so much pains by them, and will thereby excuse him from taking any pains. He that raised the estate did it by *labouring in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity*; but he that enjoys it and spends it (it may be) *hath not laboured therein*, ver. 21, and, more than that, never will; the bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a share to him; it is left him for his portion, which he rests and takes up with; and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion. Whereas, if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it.

(3.) He knows not who he must leave it to (for God makes heirs) or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it, whether a wife man or a fool, a wife man that will make it more, or a fool that will bring it to nothing? yet he shall have rule over all my labour, and foolishly undo all that which his father wisely did. It is likely Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St. Jerom, in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shewn himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall, perhaps into the hands of a fool, who according to the perverseness of his heart, makes an ill use of what was well written. So that upon the whole matter he asks, ver. 22. *What has man of all his labour? What has he to himself and to his own use? What has he that will go with him into another world?*

The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world; and that is to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it, and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, ver. 21, 25, 26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things, as to that they are *vanity*, and if happiness be expected from them, the disappointment will be *vexation of spirit*; but he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed. (1.) We must not over-toil ourselves, so as in pursuit of more to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have. (2.) We must not over-board for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have, to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe,

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the furthest we can go to rescue it from its *vanity* and the *vexation* that is in it.

(1.) We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well for the ends for which we were intrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated, ver. 26, where those only are said to have the comfort of this life that are good in *God's sight*; and again, *good before God*, truly good, as Noah, whom *God saw righteous before him*. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, That a man should make his soul to enjoy good, by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in the ways that are right before him; and ver. 25, by studying the words of the law, and being in a *quietness*, the day of the great judgment that is to come.

(2.) We must take the comfort of them. Those things will not make a happiness for the soul, all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul, and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to good account. There is therefore nothing better for a man as to those things, than to allow himself a sober, cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition is, have meat and drink of them for himself, his family, his friends, and to delight his senses and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; and not lose that in pursuit of that good that is not to be had out of them. But observe, He would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may eat and drink; no, we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in our worldly business.

(3.) We must herein acknowledge God, we must see that it is from the hand of God, i. e. (1.) The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fitted for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish that, and are thankful for it. (2.) A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he gives us wisdom to make a right use of what he has in his providence bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

Why we should have this in our eye in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it.

(1.) Because Solomon himself with all his possessions could aim at no more, and desire no better, ver. 25. *If he can hasten to this more than I? this is that which I was ambitious of, I wished for no more, and those that have but little in comparison with what I have may attain to this, to be content with what they have, and enjoy the good of it.* Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God, and pray to him for it.

(2.) Because riches are a blessing or a curse to a man, according as he has or has not a heart to make use of them.

1. God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him wisdom and knowledge, and joy, to enjoy them cheerfully himself, and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are good in *God's sight*, that are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God, and have a tender concern for all mankind, *God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come*; so the Chaldee. Or, he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.

2. He makes them a punishment to an ill man, if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: *To the sinner God gives travail*, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, to gather and keep up that, which as to himself will not only burden him like thick clay, *Hab. ii. 6.* but be a witness against him, *and eat his flesh as if it were fire*, *Jam. v. iii.* while God designs by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is good before him; for the *wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, and gathered for him that will pity the poor. Note, 1. That godliness with contentment is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in *God's sight*, and that have it from him and in him. 2. Ungodliness is commonly punishment with discontent, and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. 3. That when God gives abundance to wicked men, it is with design to force them to a resignation to his own children, when they are of age, and ready for it; as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it.—Lastly, the burden of the song is still the same, *This is also vanity, and vexation of spirit.* It is vanity at the best, even to the good man, when he has all that the sinner has scraped together, it will not make him happy without something else; but it is *vexation of spirit* to the sinner to see what he had laid up, enjoyed by him that is good in *God's sight*, and therefore evil in his. So that take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

C H A P. III.

Solomon having shewed the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found either in the schools of the learned, or in the gardens of Epicurus, or upon the exchange, he proceeds in this chapter farther to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, that therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of what God had given us, by shewing, (1.) The mutability of all human affairs, ver. 1—10. (2.) The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them, and the unsearchableness of those counsels, ver. 11—15. (3.) The vanity of worldly honour and power, which is abused for the support of oppression and persecution, if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of it, ver. 16. And for a check to proud oppressors, and to shew them their vanity, he minds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world, ver. 17. 2. That their condition in reference to this world (for of that he speaks) is no better than that of the brutes, ver. 18—21. And therefore he concludes, that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

1. **T**O every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2. A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted: 3. A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up: 4. A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance: 5. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing. 6. A time to get, and a time to lose: a time to keep, and a time to cast away: 7. A time to rent, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak: 8. A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace. 9. What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth? 10. I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it.

The scope of these verses is to shew,

1. That we live in a world of changes. That the several events of time and conditions of human life are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them; as in the revolutions of every day and every year. It is the wheel of nature, *Jam. iii. 6.* sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and by and by the contrary, ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other, the *season of this world change*, ever did, and ever will.

2. The very change concerning us, and the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy and not yet secure; not secure because we live in a world of changes, and therefore have no reason to say that *to-morrow shall be as this day*; the lowest vallies join to the highest mountains; and yet to be easy, and as he had advised, chap. ii. 24, *to enjoy the good of our labour*, in humble dependence upon God and his providence; neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fear, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here is,

(1.) A general proposition laid down, that *to every thing there is season*, ver.

ver. 1. *i. e.* 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other, yet in the revelation of all things will each take their turn and come in play. The day will give place to the night, and the night again to the day. Is it summer? it will be winter: Is it winter? stay a while and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *post gaudia luctus*; and the most clouded sky will clear up, *post nubila Phœbus*. 2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent, yet in the counsel and foreknowledge of God are punctually determined, and the very hour of them fixed, which can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

(2.) The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change; some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel: every thing under heaven is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

1. There is a time to be born, and a time to die; these are determined by the divine counsel; and as we were born, so we must die at the time appointed, *Act. xvii. 26*. Some observe that here is a time to be born, and a time to die, but no time to live, that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die: but as there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when they that lie in the grave shall be remembered, *Job xiv. 13*.

2. A time for God to plant a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, to pluck up and to destroy when the measure of their iniquity was full, *Jer. xviii. 7-9*. There is a time for men to plant, a time of the year, a time of their lives, but when that which was planted is grown fruitless and uselefs, it is time to pluck it up.

3. A time to kill, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land, and lay all waste; but when he returns in ways of mercy, then is a time to heal what he has torn, *Hos. vi. 1. 2*. to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, *Psal. xc. 15*. There is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives.

4. A time to break down a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction, but God will find a time, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down: there is a time, a set time for the Lord to build up Zion, *Psal. cii. 13-16*. There is a time for men to break up house and break off trade, and so to break down, which they that are busy building up both must expect and prepare for.

5. A time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in the times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd to laugh and dance, and make merry, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13. Ezek. xxi. 10*. but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, a time to laugh and dance, and then he expects we should serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first sow in tears, and then reap in joy.

6. A time to cast away stones, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is a time to gather stones together, for the making of strong holds, *ver. 5*. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Siloam, *Luke xiii. 4*. and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that not one stone should be left upon another; but also a time for trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. A time to embrace a friend, when we find him faithful, but a time to refrain from embracing, when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by *1 Cor. vii. 3, 4, 5. Joel ii. 16*.

8. A time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains, and a good interest, when opportunity smiles; a time when a wife man will seek (so the word is) when he is setting out in the world and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he has good hits and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy, and make hay when the sun shines. There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn: Nay, there will come a time to lose, when what has been got fast will be scattered as fast, and cannot be held fast.

9. A time to keep, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without turning the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come a time to cast away, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it, *Matt. x. 37, 38*. and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. A time to rend the garments, as upon the occasion of some great grief, and a time to sew them again, in token that the grief is over: a time to undo what we have done, and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerom applies it to the rending of the Jewish church, and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

11. A time when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty to keep silence, when it is an evil time, *Amos v. 13*. when our speaking would be the casting of pearls before swine, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss, *Psal. xxxix. 2*. but there is also a time to speak for the glory of God, and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation: and it is a great part of christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

12. A time to love, and shew ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come a time to hate, when we shall cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for suspicion, which love is loth to admit.

Lastly, A time of war, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour; when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights: when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for a time of peace, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed, and he shall make wars to cease, *Psal. xli. 9*. when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God hath set the one over against the other, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

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(3.) The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance, *ver. 9. What profit hath he that worketh?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves, or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

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11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. 14. I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. 15. That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been, and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here he shews the hand of God in all those changes. It is he that has made every creature to be that to us that it is, and therefore we must have our eye always up unto him.

1. We must make the best of that which is, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it. He has made every thing very beautiful in his time, *ver. 11*. and therefore while its time lasts we must be reconciled to it; nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he has appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. 2. That which to us seems most unpleasant, yet in its proper time is decent enough. Cold is as becoming in winter, as heat in summer; and the night in its turn is a black beauty, as the day in its turn is a bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the divine providence, and all its disposals; so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God, and the comfort of those that trust in him: Though we see not the complete beauty of providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished; then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time, and it will be the wonder of eternity. *Deut. xxxii. 4. Ezek. i. 18*.

2. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God hath made all beautiful, every thing is done well, as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either, but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them, then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels; nor to the end of them, which crowns the action, then we should see the product to be glorious; but we must expect till the veil be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings, nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us*.

Those words, *He hath set the world in their hearts*, are differently understood. 1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble, "God hath not left himself without witnesses of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but hath set it forth to be observed in the book of the world, and this he hath set in men's hearts, i. e. given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs, so that if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance."

2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; so Bishop Reynolds, "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them." The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

3. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. There is no certain, lasting good in these things, what good there is in them we are here told, *ver. 12, 13*. We must make a good use of them,

(1.) For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them, is to do good with them, to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests: What have we our beings, capacities and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake, if we think we were born for ourselves, no, it is our business to do good, it is in that that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid out, and will turn to the best account. Observe, it is to do good.

good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore had need to redeem time. It is in this life, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life: Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity.

(2.) For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, rejoice, and enjoy the good of our labour, as it is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and take his love, return him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy; eat and drink to his glory, and *serve him with joyfulness of heart in the abundance of all things*. If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men fondly to spare for the present that they may hoard up all for hereafter: it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Grace and wisdom to do this is the gift of God, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

4. We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the divine providence, both as to personal and public concerns, and bring our minds to them, because God in all performeth the thing that is appointed for us, acts according to the counsel of his will; and we are here told,

(1.) That the counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to it. It must be as God will; *I know* (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) *that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever*, ver. 14. He is in one mind, and who can turn him? His measures are never broke, nor is he ever put upon new counsels, but what he hath purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat or disannul it: It behoves us therefore to say, Let it be as God will, for how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.

(2.) That that counsel needs not be altered, for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be amended. If we could see it altogether at one view, we should see it so perfect, that *nothing can be put to it*, for there is no deficiency in it, *nor any thing taken from it*, for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As to the word of God, so the works of God are each perfect in their kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them, or to diminish from them, *Deut. iv. 2*. It is therefore as much our interest as our duty to bring our duty to the will of God.

5. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. *God doth all that men should fear before him*, to convince them that there is a God above them, that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose dispose they are and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are and all events concerning them; and that therefore they ought to have their eyes towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changeth his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him, and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world, is the support and advancement of religion among men.

6. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government. The sun riseth and setteth, the moon increaseth and decreaseth, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning, according to the ordinances of heaven, so it is with events of providence, ver. 15. *That which has been is now*: God has not of late begun to use this method; no, things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now, and so they will be; *that which is to be hath already been*; and therefore we speak inconsiderately, when we say, Surely the world was never so bad as it is now, or, none ever met with such disappointments as we meet with, or, the times will mend; they may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for *God requireth that which is past*, i. e. repeats what he has formerly done, and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men, and *shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock removed out of his place*? There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it taken us, but such as is common to men. Let us not be proud and secure in prosperity, for God may recal a past trouble, and order that to seize us, and spoil our mirth, *Psal. xxx. 7*. nor let us despair in adversity, for God may call back the comforts that are past, as he did to Job. We may apply this to our past actions, and our behaviour under the changes that have been concerning us, God will call us to account for *that which is past*; and therefore when we enter into a new condition, we should judge ourselves for our sins in our former condition, prosperous or afflicted.

16. And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. 17. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is a time there for every purpose, and for every work*. 18. I said in mine heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. 19. For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for *all is vanity*. 20. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? 22. Wherefore I perceive that *there is nothing better*, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Solomon is still shewing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity: Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men, nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world: In these verses he shews that power, than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of, and life itself, than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of, are nothing without the fear of God.

1. Here is the vanity of a man as mighty; man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to; man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice is appealed to; and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent; nay, he is

of those to whom it is said, *Ye are gods*; but without the fear of God it is vanity, for set that aside, and,

(1.) The judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well, but will abuse, instead of doing good with it, will do hurt with it, and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself, and to all about him, ver. 16. Solomon perceived, by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men; that there was *wickedness in the place of judgment*. It is not so above the sun; far be it from God that he should do iniquity or pervert justice; but under the sun it is often found that that which should be the refuge, proves the person of oppressed innocency. *Man being in honour, and not understanding what he ought to do, becomes like the beasts that perish*, like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, *Psal. xlix. 24*. Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even in the places where judgment was in pretence administered, and righteousness was expected, *there was iniquity*; men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for right; this is *vanity and vexation*; for, 1. It had been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such: 2. It will prove better for the judges they had had no power, than to have had it, and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

(2.) The judge himself will be judged for not judging right. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men, he looked up to God the judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment, ver. 17. *I said in my heart*, that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment; *God shall judge between the righteous and the wicked*, shall judge for the righteous, and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked, and reckon with them for all their *unrighteous decrees*, and the *grievousness which they have prescribed*, *Isa. x. 1*. With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment of the pride and cruelty of oppressors, *Psal. xcii. 7*. and it is an unspeakable comfort to the oppressed that their cause will be heard over again: Let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another Judge that *standeth before the door*. And though the day of affliction may last long, yet *there is a time*, a set time for the examinations of every purpose and every work done under the sun. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming; *Psal. xxxvii. 13*. With God *there is a time for the re-hearing of causes*, redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees, though as yet we see it not here, *Job xxiv. 1*.

2. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally concerning the state of the sons of men in this world, their life and being on earth, and shew that their reason, without religion and the fear of God, doth advance them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

1. What he aims at in this account of man's estate.

(1.) That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified; that they might fear God, so the margin reads it; that if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may thank themselves, and lay no blame on God; let them clear him, and not say; he made this world to be a man's prison, and life to be his penance; no, God made man, in respect both of honour and comfort, *little lower than the angels*; if he be mean and miserable it is his own fault. Or, that God, i. e. the word of God, might manifest them, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be *quick and powerful*, and a judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we lie to God's knowledge and judgment.

(2.) That men may be humbled, may be villified, may be mortified; that they might see that they themselves are beasts. It is something to do to convince proud men that they are but men, *Psal. ix. 20*. much more to convince ill men that they are beasts, that, being destitute of religion, they are as the beasts that perish, as the horse and the mule, that have no understanding: Proud oppressors are as beasts, as roaring lions, and ranging bears: Nay, every man that minds his body only, and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish at least to die like one.

2. The proof he gives of it; that which he undertakes to prove is, that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded man has no pre-eminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, placeth his confidence, and expects a happiness in, is vanity, ver. 19. Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his iniquity, ver. 16. and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come, ver. 17. by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies there is an end of him, and therefore while he lives he may live as he list; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, but it is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father, *Psal. xlix. 14*. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*, and that he intends to shew the vanity of this world's wealth and honours, "by the equal condition in mere outward respects (as Bishop Reynolds expounds it) between men and beasts."

(1.) The events concerning both seem much alike, ver. 19. *That which befall the sons of men*, is no other than that which befall the beasts; a great deal of knowledge of human bodies is gained by the anatomy of the bodies of brutes: When the deluge swept away the old world, the beasts perished with mankind: horses and men are killed in battle with the same weapons of war.

(2.) The end of both to an eye of sense seems alike too: *They have all one breath*, and breathe in the same air, and it is the general description of both, that in their nostrils is the breath of life, *Gen. vii. 22*. and therefore, as the one dies, so dies the other; in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it doth with a man.

1. As to their bodies the change is altogether the same, bating the different respects that are paid to them by the survivors: Let a man be buried with the burial of an ass, *Jer. xxii. 19*. and what pre-eminence then has he above a beast? The touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of Moises, contracted a greater ceremonial pollution, than the touch of the carcase even of an unclean beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes, that all go unto one place, the dead bodies of men and beasts putrify alike, all are of the dust, in their original, for we see all turn to dust again, in their corruption. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishment, when they must not only be reduced to the earth very shortly, but must be so in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs?

2. As to their spirits there is indeed a vast difference, but not a visible one, ver. 21. It is certain that the spirit of the sons of men at death is ascending, it goes upward to the Father of spirits, who made it, to the world of spirits, to which it is allied; it dies not with the body, but is redeemed from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15*. It goes upward to be judged and determined to an unchangeable state. It is as certain that the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth, it dies with the body, it perishesth and is gone at death. The soul of a beast is at death like a candle blown out, there is an end of it; whereas the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a dark lantern, which leaves the lantern useless indeed, but doth itself shine brighter. This great difference there is between the

the spirits of men and beasts, and a good reason it is, why men should *set their affections on things above*, and lift up their souls to those things, not suffering men, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth: But *who knows* this difference? we cannot see the ascent of the fine, and the descent of the other with our bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense, as all carnal sensualists do, that *walk in the sight of their eyes*, and will not admit any other discoveries, by their own rule of judgment, have *no pre-eminence above the beasts*. *Who knows?* i. e. who considers this? *Isa. liii. 1.* very few; were it better considered the world would be every way better; but the most of men live as if they were to be here always, or as if when they die there were an end of them: and it is not strange those live like beasts, who think they shall die like beasts; but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

3. An inference drawn from it, *ver. 22.* *There is nothing better*, as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, *than that a man should rejoice in his own works*, i. e. (1.) Keep a clear conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place of righteousness: *Let every man prove his own work*, and approve himself to God in it, *so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone*, Gal. vi. 4. Let him not get or keep any thing but what he can rejoice in: See 2 Cor. i. 12. (2.) Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us let us rejoice in it and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burden to ourselves, and leave others the joy of it; *for that is our portion*, not the portion of our souls, miserable are they that have their portion in this life, *Psal. xvii. 14.* and fools are they that choose it and take up with it, *Luke xii. 19.* but it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had, and making the best of it; and the reason is because none can give us a sight of *what shall be after us*; either who shall have our estates, or what use they will make of them. When we are gone, it is likely we shall not see what is after us, there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, *Job xiv. 21.* They in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this; and while we are here we cannot foresee *what shall be after us*, either as to our families or the public; *it is not for us to know the times and seasons that shall be after us*, which as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us look before us to another life.

C H A P. IV.

Solomon having shewed the vanity of this world, in the temptation which those in power are in to oppress and trample upon their subjects, here further shews, 1. The temptation which the oppressed are in to discontent and impatience, *ver. 1—3.* 2. The temptation which those that love their ease are in to take their ease and neglect business, for fear of being envied, *ver. 4—6.* 3. The folly of boarding up abundance of worldly wealth, *ver. 7, 8.* 4. A remedy against that folly, in being made sensible of the benefit of society and mutual assistance, *ver. 9—12.* 5. The mutability even of royal dignity, not only through the folly of the prince himself, *ver. 13, 14.* but through the fickleness of the people, let the prince be never so discreet, *ver. 15, 16.* It is not the prerogative even of kings themselves to be exempted from the vanity and vexation that attends these things, let none else then expect it.

1. **SO** I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. 2. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive. 3. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Solomon had a large soul, 1 Kings iv. 29. and it appeared by this, among other things, that he had a very tender concern for the miserable part of mankind, and took cognizance of the afflictions of the afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task, *chap. iii. 16, 17.* and put them in mind of the judgment to come, to be a curb to their insolence; now here he observes the oppressed; this he did no doubt as a prince, to do them justice, and avenge them of their adversaries, for he both feared God and regarded men: But here he doth it as a preacher, and shews,

(1.) The troubles of their condition, *ver. 1.* and of those he speaks very feelingly, and with compassion. It grieved him,

1. To see might prevailing against right, to see so much oppression done under the sun; to see servants, and labourers, and poor workmen oppressed by their masters, who take advantage of their necessity to impose what terms they please upon them; debtors oppressed by cruel creditors, and creditors too by fraudulent debtors; tenants oppressed by hard landlords, and orphans by treacherous guardians; and worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary princes and unjust judges: Such oppressions are done under the sun, above the sun righteousness reigns for ever. Wife men will consider these oppressions, and contrive to do something for the relief of those that are oppressed. *Blessed is he that considers the poor.*

2. To see how those that were wronged laid to heart the wrongs that were done them. He beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and perhaps could not forbear weeping with them. The world is a place of weepers look which way we will, and we have a melancholy scene presented to us, the tears of those that are oppressed with one trouble or other. They find it is no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret, as *Job, chap. xvi. 20. xxx. 26.* but *blessed are they that mourn.*

3. To see how unable they were to help themselves. On the side of their oppressors there was power, when they had done wrong to stand to it, and make good what they had done, so that the poor were borne down with a strong hand, and had no way to do themselves right. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good, perverted to support in doing wrong.

4. To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept and needed comfort, but there was none to do that friendly office, they had no comfort, their oppressors were big and threatening, and therefore they had no comforter; they that should have comforted them durst not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors, and being made their companions for offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

(2.) The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in

their graves, and to wish they had never been born, *ver. 2, 3.* and Solomon is ready to agree with them, for it serves to prove that *all is vanity and vexation*, since life itself is often so; and if we undervalue it in comparison with the favour and fruition of God, as St. Paul, *Act. xx. 24. Phil. i. 23.* it is our praise; but if (as here) only for the sake of the miseries that attend it, it is our infirmity, and we judge therein after the flesh, as *Job* and *Elijah* did.

1. He here thinks them happy that have ended this miserable life, have done their part and quitted the stage. *I praised the dead that are already dead*, slain outright, or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life, dead already, before they had well begun to live, I was pleased with their lot, and had it been in their own choice should have praised their wisdom, for but peeping into the world and then retiring, as not liking it: I concluded it is better with them than with the living that are yet alive, and that is all, dragging the long and heavy chain of life; and wearing out its tedious minutes. This may be compared not with *Job iii. 20, 21.* but with *Rev. xiv. 13.* where in times of persecution (and such Solomon is here describing) it is not the passion of man, but the spirit of God that saith, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from hence forth.* Note the condition of the saints that are dead and gone to rest with God, is upon many accounts better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and warfare.

2. He thinks them happy that never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all, *he that has not been is happier than both they*: better never to have been born than to be born to see the evil work that is done under the sun; to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to amend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy; nor ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

4. ¶ Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. 5. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. 6. Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the observation and consideration of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends the business of this world, which he had spoken of before, *chap. ii. 11.*

1. If a man be acute and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill will of his neighbours, *ver. 4.* Suppose he take a great deal of pains, and goes through all travail, doth not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour, nor doth he get it dishonestly, wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by all the rightness of work, by applying himself to his own proper business, and managing it by all the rules of equity and fair-dealing, yet for this he is envied of his neighbour, and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shews, (1.) What little conscience most men have, that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word, and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downright diabolism. (2.) What little comfort wife and useful men must expect to have in this world: Let them behave themselves never so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and who can stand before envy? *Prov. xxvii. 4.* They that excel in virtue will always be an eye-sore to those that exceed in vice; which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it not from men but from God, and not to count upon satisfaction and happiness in the creature; for if right works prove vanity and vexation of spirit, no works under the sun can prove otherwise: But for every work a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not value it though he be envied of his neighbour, only it may make him love the world the less.

2. If a man be stupid and dull, and blundering in his business, he doth ill for himself, *ver. 5.* The fool that goes about his work as if his hands were muffled and folded together, that doth every thing awkwardly; the sluggard (for he is a fool) that loves his ease, and folds his hands together to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour, he eateth his own flesh, is a cannibal to himself, brings himself into such a poor condition that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition, that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation: He has a dog's life, hunger and ease. Because he sees active men that thrive in the world envied, he runs into the other extreme; and lest he should be envied for his right works, he doth every thing wrong, and doth not deserve to be pitied. Note, idleness is a sin that is its own punishment.

The following words, *ver. 6.* Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit, may be taken either, 1. As the sluggard's argument for the excuse of himself in his idleness; he folds his hands together, abusieth and misapplieth a good truth for his justification; as if, because a little with quietness is better than abundance with strife, therefore a little with idleness, is better than abundance with honest labour: Thus wife in his own conceit is he, *Prov. xxvi. 16.* But 2. I rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean between that travail which will make a man envied, and that slothfulness which will make a man eat his own flesh: Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessities, but not grasp at both the hands full, which will but create us vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do best. A man may have but a handful of the world, and yet may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of quietness, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good will of his neighbours, while many that have both their hands full, have more than heart could wish, have a great deal of trouble and vexation with it. Those that cannot live of a little, it is to be feared would not live as they should if they had never so much.

7. ¶ Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. 8. There is one alone, and there is not a second: yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither, saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. 9. ¶ Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to

to help him up. 11. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of the vanity of this world, that many times the more men have of it, the more they would have; and on this they are so intent, that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Now Solomon here shews,

(1.) That selfishness is the cause of the devil, *ver. 7, 8.* *There is one alone, that minds none but himself, cares for no body, but would it he could be placed alone in the midst of the earth, there is not a second, nor doth he desire there should be, one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing that goes besides him. See how this covetous muckworm is here described.*

1. He makes himself a mere slave to his business. Though he has no charge, *neither child nor brother*, none to take care of but himself, none to hang upon him or draw upon him, no poor relations, nor dares he marry for fear of the expence of a family, *yet there is no end of his labour*, he is at it night and day, early and late, and will scarce allow necessary rest to himself, and those he employs: He doth not confine himself within the bounds of his own calling, but is for having a hand in any thing that he can get by. See *Psal. cxxvii. 2.*

2. He never thinks he has enough. *His eye is not satisfied with riches.* Covetousness is called *the lust of the eye*, 1 John ii. 16, because the beholding of it with his eyes is all that the worldling seems to covet, *Eccles. v. 11.* He has enough for his back (as Bishop Reynolds observes) for his belly, for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes; though he can but see it, can but count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy that he has not more to regale his eyes with.

3. He denies himself the comfort of what he hath. He bereaves his soul of good. If our souls be bereaved of good, it is we ourselves that do bereave them; others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of our graces and comforts, our spiritual good things; it is our own fault if we do not enjoy ourselves; yet many are so set upon the world, that in pursuit of it they bereave their souls of good here and for ever; make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this world too, and this present life. Worldly people pretending to be wise for themselves, are really enemies to themselves.

4. He has no excuse for doing this. *He has neither child nor brother*; none that he is bound to, on whom he may lay out what he has to satisfaction while he lives; none that he has a kindness for, for whom he may lay it up to his satisfaction, and to whom he may leave it when he dies; none that are poor, or dear to him.

5. He has not consideration enough to shew himself the folly of this; he never puts this question to himself, *For whom do I labour* thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need? Do I consider that it is but for the body that I am labouring, a dying body; it is for others, and I know not for whom; perhaps for a fool, that will scatter it as fast as I have gathered it; perhaps for a foe, that will be ungrateful to my memory. Note, It is wisdom for those that take pains about the world, to consider who they take all this pains for; and whether it be really worth while to bereave themselves of good, that they may bestow it on a stranger. If men do not consider this it is vanity, and a fore travail; they shame themselves, and vex themselves to no purpose.

(2.) That sociableness is the cure of this evil: Men are thus fordid, because they are all for themselves. Now Solomon shews here, by divers instances, that it is not good for man to be alone, Gen. ii. 18. he designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage and friendship, two things which covetous misers decline, because of the charge of them; but such is the comfort and advantage of them both, if prudently contracted, that they will very well quit cost. Man in paradise itself could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made but matched.

1. Solomon lays this down for a truth, that *two are better than one*, and more happy jointly than either of them could be separately; more pleased in one another than they could be in themselves only; mutually serviceable to each other's welfare, and by an united strength more likely to do good to others: *They have a good reward for their labour*, i. e. whatever service they do it is returned to them another way. He that serves himself only has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly proves more unjust and ungrateful to himself than his friend, if he should serve him, would be to him; witness him that labours endlessly, and yet bereaves his soul of good; he has no reward of his labour; but he that is kind to another has a good reward; the pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an abundant recompence for all the work and labour of love.

2. Hence he infers the mischief of solitude: *Woe to him that is alone*; He lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against: He wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastic life then sure was never intended for a state of perfection, nor that those should be reckoned the greatest lovers of God that cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.

3. He proves it by divers instances of the benefit of friendship and good conversation.

(1.) Occasional succour in an exigence. It is good for two to travel together, for if one happen to fall, and perhaps so as not to be able to get up himself, the other will be ready to help him up; a friend in need is a friend indeed; whereas if one travel alone, and get a fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into sin, his friend will help to restore him with the spirit of meekness: If he fall into trouble, his friend will help to comfort him and alluage his grief.

(2.) Mutual warmth. As a fellow-traveller is of use (*amicus pro vehiculo*) so is a bed-fellow: *If two lie together they have heat*: So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Christians warm one another by provoking one another to love and do good works.

(3.) United strength. If an enemy find a man alone he is likely to prevail against him, with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but if he have a second he may do well enough, *two shall withstand him*; you shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours, according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai, 2 Sam. x. 11. and so both are conquerors, whereas acting separately both had been conquered; as was said of the ancient Britons when the Romans invaded them, *Dum singula pugnant universi vincuntur*. In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another, as well as in our spiritual work; next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, *A threefold cord is not easily broken*, no more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread and each single arrow is. Two together he compares to a threefold cord, for where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his spirit come to them

and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. *They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them.*

13. ¶ Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. 14. For out of prison he cometh to reign, whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor. 15. I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. 16. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely, this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another, concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shews here to be an uncertain thing: he had said so, *Prov. xxvii. 24.* *The crown doth not endure to every generation*, and his son found it so: Nothing more slippery than the highest post of honour, without wisdom and the peoples' love.

1. A king is not happy, unless he have wisdom, *ver. 13, 14.* He that is truly wise, prudent, and pious, although he be poor in the world, and very young, and, upon both accounts despised and little taken notice of, yet he is better, more truly valuable and worthy of respect, is likely to do better for himself, and to be a greater blessing to his generation, than a king, than an old king, and upon both accounts venerable, both for his gravity and for his dignity, if he be foolish, and knows not how to manage public affairs himself, nor will be admonished and advised by others; who knows not to be admonished, i. e. will not suffer any counsel or admonition to be given him, none about him dares contradict him, or will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that is given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings, that it is the greatest dishonour to them that can be, not to be admonished. Folly and wilfulness commonly go together, and those that most need admonition can worst bear it: and neither men's age nor their titles will secure them respect, if they have not true wisdom and virtue to recommend them; but those will gain men honour, even under the disadvantages of youth and poverty.

To prove the wise child better than the foolish king, he shews what each of them came to, *ver. 14.* 1. A poor man by his wisdom comes to be preferred as Joseph, who, when he was but young, was brought out of prison to be the second man in the kingdom; to which story Solomon seems here to refer. Providence sometimes raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, *Psal. cxlii. 7, 9.* Wisdom has not only wrought men's liberty, but their dignity raised them from the dunghill, from the dungeon to the throne. 2. A king by his folly and wilfulness comes to be impoverished; though he was born in his kingdom, came to it by inheritance, though he has lived to be old in it, and has had time to fill his treasures, yet, if he take ill courses, and will no more be admonished as he hath been, thinking, because he is old, he is past it, he becomes poor, his treasure is exhausted, and perhaps he is forced to resign his crown, and retire into privacy.

2. A king is not likely to continue, if he have not a confirmed interest in the affections of the people; that is intimated, but somewhat obscurely, in the two last verses. 1. He that is king must have a successor, a second, a child that shall stand up in his stead; his own success, or perhaps that poor and wise child spoken of, *ver. 13.* Kings, when they grow old, must have the mortification of seeing those that are to jussle them out, and stand up in their stead. 2. It is incident to the people to adore the rising sun; all the living which walk under the sun, are with the second child, are in his interests, are conversant with him, and make their court to him more than to the father, whom they look upon as going off, and despise him, because his best days are done. Solomon considered this, he saw this to be the disposition of his own people, which appeared immediately after his death, in their complaints of his government, and their affection of a change. 3. People are never long easy and satisfied: *There is no end*, no rest, of all the people, they are continually fond of changes, and know not what they would have. 4. This is no new thing, but it has been the way of all that have been before them: there have been instances of this in every age; even Samuel and David could not always please. As it has been, so it is like to be still, they that come after will be of the same spirit, and shall not long rejoice in him that at first they seemed extreme fond of: To-day Hosanna, to-morrow Crucify. It cannot but be a great grief to princes, to see themselves thus slighted by those they have studied to oblige, and have depended upon: there is no faith in man, no steadfastness; *This is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

C H A P. V.

Solomon in this chapter discourseth, (1.) Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which he had already observed to be in wisdom, learning, pleasure, honour, power, and business; that we may not be deceived by those things, nor have our spirits vexed with the disappointments we meet with in them, let us make conscience of our duty to God, and keep up our communion with him; but withal, he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which lose them their excellency, and render them unable to help against other vanities: If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In bearing the word, and offering sacrifice, *ver. 1.* 2. In prayer, *ver. 2, 3.* 3. In making vows, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* 4. In pretending to divine dreams, *ver. 7.* Now, (1.) For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, *ver. 7.* (2.) To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, *ver. 8.* (3.) Concerning the wealth of this world, and the vanity and vexation that attends it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life, *ver. 9.* but as for silver and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, *ver. 10.* 2. They are unprofitable, *ver. 11.* 3. They are disquieting, *ver. 12.* 4. They often prove hurtful and destroying, *ver. 13.* 5. They are perishing, *ver. 14.* 6. They must be left behind when we die, *ver. 15, 16.* 7. If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness, *ver. 17.* And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God hath given us, with an eye to him that is the Giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it, and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of

of this world (which we take up most of our time) so as that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath-days nor our week-days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, we have learned two good lessons.

1. **K**EEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. 2. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Solomon's design in driving us off from the world, by shewing us the vanity of that, is to drive us to God and to our duty; that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules, nor depend upon the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages; and therefore,

(1.) He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of public worship, to the temple, which he himself had built at a vast expence; when he reflected with regret on all his other works, chap. ii. 4. he did not repent that, but reflected on it with pleasure, yet mentions it not, lest he should seem to reflect on it with pride, yet here sends those to it that would know more of the vanity of the world, and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, went into the sanctuary of God, Psal. lxxiii. 17. Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the Creator, have recourse to the word of God's grace, and consult that; to the throne of his grace, and solicit that: In the word and prayer, there is a salve for every sore.

(2.) He chargeth us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things, but if we mismanage them they become vain to us. And therefore,

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care: *Keep thy foot*, not keep it back from the house of God, as Prov. xxv. 17. nor go slowly thither, as one unwilling to draw nigh to God, but look well to thy going, *ponder the path of thy feet*, lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called *hastening with the feet*, Prov. xix. ii. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work, keep thy affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed. Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua, to put off their shoes, Exod. iii. 5. Josh. v. 15. in token of subjection and reverence, *Keep thy feet clean*, Exod. xxx. 19.

2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not the sacrifice of fools, i. e. of wicked men, for they are fools, and their sacrifice is abomination to the Lord, Prov. xv. 8. that we bring not the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice; for we are plainly told, that will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it; that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, for that is the sacrifice of fools: bodily exercise, if that be all is a jest; none but a fool will think thus to please him who is a spirit, and requires the heart; and they will see their folly when they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose, for want of sincerity. They are fools, for they consider not that they do evil; they think they are doing God and themselves good service, when really they are putting a great affront upon God, and a great cheat upon their own souls, by their hypocritical devotions. It is possible men may be doing evil, even when they profess to be doing good, and even then when they do not know it, when they do not consider it. They know not but to do evil, so some read it: wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. Or, they consider not that they do evil, i. e. they act as a venture, right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, is all one to them.

3. That we may not bring the sacrifice of fools, we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must be ready to hear, i. e. (1.) We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached: be swift to hear the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifices, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be a reasonable service, otherwise it is the sacrifice of fools. (2.) We must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us; hearing is often put for obeying, and that is that which is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. xv. 22. Isai. i. 15, 16. We then come in a right frame to holy duties, when we come with this upon our heart, *Speak Lord, for thy servant hears. Let the word of the Lord come* (said a good man), *and if I had six hundred necks, I would bow them all to the authority of it.*

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God, ver. 2. *Be not rash with thy mouth*, in making either prayers, or protestations, or promises, *Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God*. Note, (1.) When we are in the house of God, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God and in his presence; there where he had promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us, and our's ought to be unto him. (2.) We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we draw nigh to him in holy duties; he is one with whom we have to do, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage.

(3.) What we utter before God must come from the heart, and therefore we must not be rash with our mouth, never let our tongue out-run our thoughts in our devotions; the words of our mouth must always be the product of the meditation of our heart. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour and religion, Matth. xy. 8, 9.

(4.) It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice before we speak, when we are to speak either from God: preaching, or to God in prayer, and not to utter any thing indecent and undigested, 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

5. We must be few of our words in the presence of God, i. e. we must be reverent and deliberate; not talk to God as boldly and carelessly as we do to one another, not speak what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood and remembered, and may make impression; no, when we speak to God we must consider,

1. That between him and us there is an infinite distance. *God is in*

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heaven, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men: where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels, and is exalted above all our blessings and praise. We are on earth, the farthest of his throne, are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him, or to have any communion with him, therefore we must be very grave, and humble, and serious, and observe a decency in speaking to him, as we do when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and in token of this, let our words be few, that they may be well chosen, Job. ix. 14. This doth not condemn all long prayers; were they not good, the Pharisees had not used them for a pretence: Christ prayed all night, and we are bid to continue in prayer; but it could not be carelessly, heartless praying, vain repetitions, Matth. vi. 7. repeating *Pater-nosters* by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the Scripture teacheth, and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest not speaking by rule, we speak anisms.

2. That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them the sacrifice of fools, ver. 3. As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business when fills our heads; so many words and hasty ones used in prayer, are an evidence of idly reigning in the heart, i. e. ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with, both God and ourselves; low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation, a fool is known by the multitude of words; they that know least talk most, Eccl. x. 11. much more in devotion; there, no doubt, a prating fool shall fall, Prov. x. 8—10. th. 11 fall short of acceptance. Those are fools indeed, who think they shall be heard, in prayer, for their much speaking.

4. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it: for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. 6. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? 7. For in the multitude of dreams and many words, there are also divers vanities, but fear thou God. 8. If thou see the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

Four things we are exhorted to in these four verses:

1. To be conscientious in paying our vows. A vow is a bond upon the soul, Numb. xxx. 2. by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only in general, to that which we are already bound to, but in some particular instances, to which we were not under any antecedent obligation to honour God; and serve the interests of his kingdom among men: when under the sense of some affliction, Psal. lxxvi. 14. or in the pursuit of some mercy, 1 Sam. i. 11. thou hast vowed such a vow as this unto God, know that thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and thou canst not go back; therefore,

(1.) Pay it: perform what thou hast promised, bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him, pay that which thou hast vowed; pay it in full, and keep not back any part of the price; pay it in kind, do not alter it, or change it, so the law was, Lev. xxvii. 10. Have we vowed, to give our ourselves unto the Lord? Let us then be as good as our word, act in his service, to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves.

(2.) Defer not to pay it: If it be in the power of thine hands to pay it to-day, leave it not till to-morrow; do not beg a day, nor put it off to a more convenient season. By delay the sense of the obligation slackens and cools, and is in danger of wearing off; we thereby discover a slothfulness and backwardness to perform our vow; and, *qui non est hodie eras minus aptus erit*, the longer it is put off, the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to it: death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow, Psal. lxxvii. 11.

Two reasons are here given why we should speedily and cheerfully pay our vows. 1. Because otherwise we affront God; we play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and God has no pleasure in fools, (more is implied than is expressed) the meaning is, he greatly abhors such fools, and such foolish dealings. *Hath he need of fools?* No, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*, but will sorely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him. 2. Because otherwise we wrong ourselves, we lose the benefit of the making of the vow, nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it had better a great deal not to have vowed, more safe, and more to our advantage than to vow and not to pay. Not to have vowed had been but an omission, but to vow and not to pay, incurs the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is lying to God, Acts v. 4.

2. To be cautious in making our vows: and this is necessary in order to our being conscientious in performing them, ver. 6. (1.) We must take heed that we never vow any thing that is sinful, or may be an occasion of sin, for such a vow is ill made and must be broken. Suffer not thy mouth by such a vow, to cause thy flesh to sin, as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist. (2.) We must not vow that which, through the frailty of the flesh, we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform; as those that vow a single life, and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby, 1. They shame themselves; for they are forced to say before the angel that it was an error; that either they did not mean, or did not consider what they said; and take it, which way you will, it is bad enough. When thou hast made a vow, do not seek to evade it, nor find out excuses to get clear of the obligation of it; say not before the priest, who is called the angel or messenger of the Lord of hosts, that upon second thoughts thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligation of thy vow; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at. Some by the angel understand the guardian angel, which they suppose to attend every man, and to inspect what he doth. Others understand it of Christ, the angel of the covenant, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searcheth the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; provoke him not, for God's name is in him, and he is represented as strict and jealous, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. 2. They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is angry at the voice of those that thus lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue, and is displeased at their dissimulation, and destroys the works of their hands, i. e. blunts their enterprises, and defeats those purposes which when they made these vows they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouth, revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects and walk contrary, and at all adventures with those that thus walk contrary, and at all adventures with him. It is a snare to a man after vows to make enquiry.

3. To

3. To keep up the fear of God, *ver. 7.* Many of old pretended to have known the mind of God, by *dreams*, and were so full of them that they almost made God's people forget his name, by their *dreams*, Jer. xxiii. 25, 26. and many perplex themselves with their frightful or odd dreams, or with other people's dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster; and those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with; but in them all *there are divers vanities*, and the more if we regard them; as there are, in many words, they are but like the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them, forget them instead of repeating them, lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but *fear thou God*, have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set them before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him; and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams; the way not to be dismayed by the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is to *fear God as the king of the nations*, Jer. x. 2—5—7.

4. With that to keep down the fear of man, *ver. 8.* Set God before thee, and then if *thou seest the oppression of the poor*, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with the divine providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted; nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong. Observe here,

1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble every good man that he has a sense of justice and a concern for mankind, to *see the oppression of the poor*, because they are poor and cannot right themselves, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, oppression under colour of law, and backed with power; the kingdom in general may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular province may be committed to an ill man, by whose mal-administration justice may be perverted; so hard it is for the wisest of kings in giving preferments to be sure of their men, they can but redress the grievance when it doth appear.

2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal we may satisfy ourselves with this,

(1.) That though oppressors be high, God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, Exod. xviii. 11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag, Numb. xxiv. 7. than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world; God is the most high over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens; before him princes are worms, the brightest but glow-worms:

(2.) That though oppressors be secure God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for all their violent perverting of judgment; he regardeth, not only sees it but observes it, and keeps it on record to be called over again; his eyes are upon their ways. See Job xx. v. 23.

(3.) That there is a world of angels, for there are higher than they, and are employed by the divine justice for the protecting the injured and punishing the injurious: Sennacherib bore himself high upon his potent army, but one angel proved too hard for him and all his forces. Some, by those that are higher than they, understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable, Dan. vi. 2. the senate that receive complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors, that perhaps their superiors on earth may call them to an account; however God the Supreme in heaven will.

9. Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field. 10. He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this is only vanity. 11. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? 12. The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much, but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. 13. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. 14. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. 15. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. 16. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? 17. All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow, and wrath with his sickness.

Solomon had shewed the vanity of pleasure and gaiety and fine works, of honour and power and royal dignity, and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he doth of these things; but may he thinks is a substantial thing, and if he can but have enough of that he is happy; and that is the mistake which Solomon attacks, and attempts to rectify in these verses, and shews that there is as much vanity in great riches, and the lust of the eye about them, as there is in the lust of the flesh and the pride of life; and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate, than by spending it.

1. He grants that the products of the earth, for the support and comfort of human life, are valuable things, *ver. 9.* The profit of the earth is for all, man's body being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance, Job xxviii. 3. and that he hath so, and that a barren land is not made his dwelling (as he has deserved for being rebellious), Psal. lxxviii. 6. is an instance of God's great bounty to him. There is profit to be got out of the earth, and it is for all, all need it, it is appointed for all, there is enough for all; it is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures, the same ground brings grass for the cattle that brings herbs for the service of men. Israel had bread from heaven, angels' food, but (which is an humbling consideration) the earth is our storehouse, and the beasts fellow-commoners with us: The king himself is served of the field, and would be ill served, would be quite starved without the products of it. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman's calling, that is the most necessary of all other to the support of man's life, the many have the benefit of it, the mighty cannot live without it; it is for all, it is for the king himself. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth must remember they are for all, and therefore must look upon themselves but as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need: dainty meats and soft cloathing are only for some, but the fruit of the earth is for all. And even those that suck the abun-

dance of the seas, Deut. xxxiii. 19. cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have a competency of the fruit of the earth may despise the abundance of the seas.

2. He maintains that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding not for use, are vain things, and will not make a man easy or happy. That which our Saviour hath said, Luke xii. 15. that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth, is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by divers arguments.

1. The more men have the more they would have, *ver. 10.* a man may have but little silver and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough, and ever no more, *Goddiness with contentment is great gain: I have enough*, saith Jacob; *I have all and abound*, saith St. Paul; but, (1.) He that loveth silver, and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but enlargeth his desire as hell, Hab. ii. 5. lays house to house, and field to field, Isai. v. 8. and like the daughters of the horse-leech still cries, Give, give. Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable; nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. (2.) He that hath silver in abundance, and hath it increasing never so fast upon him, yet doth not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul; there are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingots of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay; much less will it satisfy spiritual desires; he that has never so much silver not only covets more of that, but something else, something of another nature. They that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not, Isai. lv. 2. which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, Ezek. vii. 19.

2. The more men have the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it; so that it is as broad as long, when goods increase they are increased that eat them, *ver. 11.* The more meat the more mouths. Doth the estate thrive? and doth not the family at the same time grow more numerous, and the children grow up to need more? the more men have the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the carcass is the eagles will be. What we have more than food and raiment we have it for others: and then what good is there to the owners themselves but the pleasure of beholding them with their eyes? and a poor pleasure it is: an empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers; the owner sees that as his own which those about him enjoy as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which, indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive: but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have the more care they have about it, which perplexeth them and disturbs their repose, *ver. 12.* refreshing sleep is as much the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now, 1. Those commonly sleep best that work hard, and have but what they work for: The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, not only because he hath tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him; and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about, and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he eat but little, and have but little to eat, for his weariness rocks him asleep, though his belly be not full; and though he eat much, yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent christian and his long sleep is sweet, for having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God and repose in him as his rest. 2. Those that have everything else many times cannot get a good night's sleep, but either their eyes are held waking, or their sleeps are unquiet and do not refresh them; and it is their abundance that breaks their sleep and disturbs it; both the abundance of their care, as that rich man's, who when his ground brought forth plentifully thought within himself, What shall I do? Luke xii. 18; and the abundance of what they eat and drink, which overchargeth the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Amasaerus after a banquet of wine could not sleep; and perhaps conscience of guilt both in getting and using what they have breaks their sleep as much as any thing; but God giveth his beloved sleep.

4. The more men have the more danger they are in, both of doing mischief and of having mischief done them, *ver. 13.* It is an evil, a fore evil, which Solomon himself had seen under the sun, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and woe, riches kept for the owners thereof (who have been industrious to hoard them and keep them safe to their hurt, they had better have been without them. (1.) Their riches do them hurt, make them proud and secure and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it. (2.) They do hurt with their riches, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others and dealing hardly with them. (3.) Many times they sustain hurt by their riches; they would not be envied, would not be robbed if they were not rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaughter. A very rich man (as one observes) hath sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, for no other reason but his vast and overgrown estate; so riches often take away the life of the owners thereof, Prov. i. 19.

5. The more men have the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, *ver. 14.* Those riches that have been laid up with a great deal of pains and kept with a great deal of care, perish by evil travail, by the very pains and care which they take to secure and increase them; many a one has ruined his estate by being over-solicitous to advance it and make it more, and hath lost all by catching at all; riches are perishing things, and all our travail about them, cannot make them otherwise; they make themselves wings and fly away. And he that thought he should have made his son a gentleman leaves him a beggar, he begetteth a son, and brings him up in the prospect of an estate, but when he dies leaves it under a charge of debt as much as it is worth, so that there is nothing in his hand. This is a common case, estates that made a great shew do not prove what they seemed, but cheat the heir.

6. How much sorer men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them, *ver. 15, 16.* As he came forth of his mother's womb naked, so shall he return; only as his friends when he came naked into the world, in pity to him helped him with swaddling clothes, so when he goes out they help him with grave clothes, and that is all. See Job i. 21. Psal. xlix. 17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1 Tim. vi. 7. In respect of the body we must go as we came, the dust shall return to the earth as it was; but sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin unsanctified, better we had never been born; and that seems to be the case of the worldling here spoken of, for he is said to return all points as he came, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so. This is a fore evil, he thinks it so whose heart is glued to the world, that he shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand; his riches will not go with him into another world, nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion

the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for it to eternity, that is meat that endures; but if we labour only for the world to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that upon the whole matter he may well ask, *What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?*

Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind; for that which hath more sound and substance, which is uncertain and always shifting its point, unsatisfying and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which if we take up with as our portion, we do but feed upon wind, *Ecc. xii. 1.* Men will see they have laboured for the wind, when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they let their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives, *ver. 17.* This covetous worldling that is so bent upon raising an estate, *all his days he eats in darkness and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath,* i. e. he hath not only no pleasure of his estate nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he eats the bread of sorrow, *Psal. cxxvii. 2.* but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary expences make him sick, make him fret, and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life; when he is in health he eats in darkness, always dull with care and fear about what he has; but if he be sick, *he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness;* he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business, and hinders him in his pursuits of the world; vexed that all his wealth will not give him any ease or relief; but especially terrified with the apprehensions of death, which his diseases are the harbingers of; of leaving this world and the things of it behind him, which he hath set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any sorrow after a godly sort, doth not sorrow to repentance, but he hath sorrow and wrath; is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, and at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

18. Behold, that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun, all the days of his life, which God giveth him; for it is his portion. 19. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. 20. For he shall not much remember the days of his life: because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Solomon from the vanity of riches hoarded up here infers, that the best course we can take is to use what we have well, to serve God with it, do good with it, and take the comfort of it to ourselves and our families; this he had pressed before, *chap. ii. 24. iii. 22.* Observe,

(1.) What is here recommended to us; not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or take up with present pleasures or profit for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what providence has allotted for our comfortable passage through this world: We must not starve ourselves either for covetousness, because we cannot afford ourselves good convenient, or for eagerness in our worldly pursuits, or through excessive care and grief, but eat and drink what is fit for us to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill ourselves with labour, and then leave others to enjoy the good of it, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but *all the days of our life which God gives us.* Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us the number of the days of our life, *Job xiv. 5.* let us therefore spend those days in serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must rejoice in our labour, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness; this is to rejoice in our labour, whatever it is; as *Zebulun in his going out, and Issachar in his tents.*

(2.) What is urged to recommend it to us.

1. That it is good and comely to do this; it is well, and it looks well; they that cheerfully use what God hath given them, thereby honour the giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this both their credit and comfort; *it is good and comely;* there is duty and decency in it.

2. That it is all the good we can have out of the things of this world; *it is our portion,* and in doing thus we take our portion, and make the best of bad: This is our part of our worldly possessions; God must have his part, the poor theirs, and our families theirs, but this is ours, it is all that falls to our lot out of them.

3. That a heart to do thus is such a gift of God's grace as crowns all the gifts of his providence. If God hath given a man riches and wealth, he completes the favour, and makes that a blessing indeed, if withal he gives him power to eat thereof, i. e. wisdom and grace to take the good of it, and to do good with it. If this is God's gift, we must covet it earnestly as the best gift relating to our enjoyments in this world.

4. That this is the way to make our own lives easy, and to relieve ourselves against the many toils and troubles which our lives on earth are incident to, *ver. 20.* He shall not much remember the days of his life the days of his sorrow and sore travail, his working days, his weeping days, he shall either forget them, or remember as waters that pass away; he shall not much lay to his heart his crosses, nor long retain the bitter relish of them, because God answereth him in the joy of his heart, balanceth all the grievances of his labour with the joy of it, recompenseth him for it by giving him to eat the labour of his hands. If he doth not answer all his desires and expectations in the letter of them, yet he answers them with that which is more than equivalent, in the joy of his heart. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy, and the burden of our afflictions light.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter, (1.) The royal preacher goes on further to shew the vanity of worldly wealth when men place their happiness in it, and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches in the hands of a man that is wise and generous are good for something, but in the hands

of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have. He hath wealth, *ver. 2.* he hath children to inherit it, *ver. 3.* and lives long, *ver. 3.—6.* 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it; he hath no power to eat of it, lets strangers devour it, is never filled with good, and at last has no burial, *ver. 2, 3.* 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity, and a disease, *ver. 1, 2.* 4. He prefers the condition of a still-born child before the condition of such a one, *ver. 3.* The still-born child's infelicity is only negative, *ver. 4, 5.* but that of the covetous worldling is positive, he lives a great while to see himself miserable, *ver. 6.* 5. He shews the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind, *ver. 7, 8.* and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves, *ver. 9.* which if they be gratified never so fully, leave a man but a man still, *ver. 10.* (2.) He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, that it is folly to think of making up a happiness for ourselves in the things of this world; *ver. 11; 12.* Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

1. THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: 2. A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. 3. ¶ If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. 4. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. 5. Moreover, he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. 6. ¶ Yea, though he lives a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Solomon had shewed in the close of the foregoing chapter how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence, now here he shews the evil of the contrary; having and not using, gathering to lay up for I know not what contingent emergencies to come, not to lay out on the most urgent occasions present: *This is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun,* *ver. 1.* A great deal of evil there is under the sun, there is a world above the sun, where there is no evil, yet God causeth his sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil: God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by, but their bury their talents as foolish and unprofitable, and so waste the light, and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, inspected the manners of his subjects, and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the public, which is damaged not only by men's prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other, as it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politic; if instead of circulating it signally, it will be of ill consequence. Solomon as a preacher observed the evils that were done, that he might reprove them, and warn people against them: This evil was in his days common, and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which one would think should have made people less fond of riches; the times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard; but no providence will of itself, unless the grace of God work with it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world and the things of it; nay, when riches increase we are most apt to set our hearts upon them. Now concerning the miser observe,

(1.) The abundant reason he hath to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him: 1. He hath given him riches, wealth and honour, *ver. 2.* Note, (1.) Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men: Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages will fall down and worship it. (2.) Riches, wealth, and honour are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given as his rain and sunshine, alike to all, but to some and not to others, as God sees fit. (3.) Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God doth not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of them, and serve God with them: The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. He wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires: providence has been so liberal to him that he has as much as heart could wish, and more, *Psal. lxxiii. 7.* He doth not desire grace for his soul, the better part, all he desires is enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he hath, his belly is filled with these hid treasures, *Psal. xvii. 14.*

3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to beget a hundred children, which are the stay and strength of his house, and as a quiver full of arrows to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up, and having all the immortality this world can give him. They are full of children, *Psal. xvii. 14.* while many of God's people are written childless, and stript of all.

4. To complete his happiness, he is supposed to live many years, or rather many days, for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years; the days of his years are many, and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly doth age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more: Nay, he supposeth to live a thousand years, which no man, (that we know of) ever did; nay, a thousand years twice told, a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince men by their own experience of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly wealth, and of those that expect to find any good in it but in using it.

(2.) The little heart he has to use this which God gives him for the ends and purposes for which it was given him. This is his fault and folly, that he renders not again according to the benefit done unto him, and serves not the Lord God, his benefactor, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things: In the day of prosperity he is not joyful. *Tristis est scilicet.* See his folly:

1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself: He has meat before him, he has wherewith to maintain himself and family comfortably, but he has not power to eat thereof: his sordid miserly temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no not upon himself, no not upon that which is most necessary for himself: He has not power to reason himself

himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed that has not power, to use what God gives him; for God gives him not *that power*, but withhold it from him, to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth; because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it.

2. He suffers those to prey upon him that he is under no obligations to, *a stranger catcheth it*. This is the common fate of misers, they will not trust their own children, perhaps, but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling; insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God orders it so that *a stranger eateth, strangers devour his strength*. Hof. vii. 9. Prov. vi. 10. This may well be called *vainity, and an evil disease*. What we have we have in vain, if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched distemper, which keeps us from using it. Our worst diseases are those that arise from the corruption of our own hearts.

3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions; not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it, and throws it from him. *His soul is not filled with good*, ver. 3. He is still unsatisfied and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled, but *his soul is not filled with good*; no, not with that good, for it is still craving more: Nay, ver. 7. *he has not seen good*, he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking further, and looking with envy on those that have more. He has not even the sensible good of an estate: Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure even on them.

4. *He has no burial*, i. e. none agreeable to his rank, no decent burial, but *the burial of an ass*; either through the sordidness of his temper he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbids it, or the strangers that have eaten him up leave him so poor at last that he has not wherewithal, or those to whom he leaves what he has have so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely, which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

(3.) The preference which the preacher gives to an untimely birth before him: *An untimely birth*, a child that is carried from the womb to the grave is *better than he*. Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe, than that which is left to hang on it till it is rotten. Job in his passion thinks the condition of an untimely birth better than his, when he was in adversity, Job iii. 16. but Solomon here pronounceth it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him.

1. He grants the condition of an untimely birth upon many accounts to be very sad, ver. 4, 5. *He comes in with vanity*, for as to this world, he that is born and dies presently was born in vain, and he *departs in darkness*, little or no notice is taken of him, being an abortive, he has no name, or if he had it would soon be forgotten and buried in oblivion, it would be covered with darkness, as the body is with the earth: Nay, ver. 5. *he hath not seen the sun*, but from the darkness of the womb he is hurried immediately to that of the grave; and, which is worse than not being known to any, he has not known any thing, and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than an untimely birth that has not seen the sun, nor known any thing.

2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser, *this untimely birth hath more rest than the other*, for this hath some rest, but the other has none; this has no trouble and disquiet, but the other is in a perpetual toss, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is the longer the rest: and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.

*It is better die a child at four,
Than live, and die so at fourscore.*

The reason he gives why *this has more rest*, is because *all go to one place to rest in*, and this is sooner at his rest, ver. 6. He that *lives a thousand years* goes to the same place with the child that doth not live an hour, chap. iii. 20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in men's condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and to outward appearances their deaths are alike. The grave is to one as well as another a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living, and a sleeping-place: It is the common rendezvous of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes in the waggon; the dust of both mingle, and lie undistinguished.

7. All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. 8. For what hath the wife more than the fool? what hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living? 9. ¶ Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit. 10. That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

The preacher here further shews the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth, and expecting happiness in it.

1. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for ourselves no more but a maintenance, ver. 7. *All the labour of man is for his mouth*, which craveth it of him, Prov. xvi. 26. it is but food and raiment, what is more others have, not we: It is all for the mouth; meats are but for the belly, and the belly for meats, there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul: A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more.

2. Those that have never so much, yet are still craving; let a man labour never so much for his mouth, yet the appetite is not filled. 1. Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be feasted to-day, and yet hungry to-morrow. 2. Worldly sinful desires are insatiable, chap. v. 10. Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a droy, which doth but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus: *Though all a man's labour fall out to his own mind* (ori ejus obveniat. Juv.) just as himself would have it, yet his desire is not satisfied, still he has a mind of something more. 3. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction at all. *The soul is not filled*, so the word is: When God gave Israel their request, he sent leanness into their souls, Psalm cvi. 15. He was a fool that, when his barns were full, said, *Soul, take thine ease*.

3. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it as a wise man: nay, and perhaps not be so sensible of

the vexation of it, *What has the wife more than the fool?* ver. 8. perhaps he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good preferment as the fool hath: Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wife man, a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than supplies for back and belly? and that a half-witted man may do. A fool can fare as well and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any public appearance as a wife man; so that if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which the wife man has more than the fool, as to this world they would be upon a level.

4. Even a poor man that has business, and is discreet and diligent, and dextrous in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world, as he that is loaded with an overgrown estate. Consider *what the poor hath* less than the rich, if he do but know to walk before the living, know how to carry himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well, and improve his opportunities; *What has he?* Why, he is better beloved and more respected among his neighbours, and has a better interest than many a rich man that is griping and haughty? *What has he?* Why he has as much of the comfort of this life, has food and raiment; and is therewith content; and so is as truly rich as he that hath abundance.

5. The enjoyment of what we have cannot but be acknowledged more rational, than a greedy grasping at more, ver. 9. *Better is the sight of the eyes*, making the best of that which is present, than the wandering of the desire, the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always content, though he has never so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has never so much. We cannot say, that *better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon God*, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things but *better is the sight of the eyes than the roving of the desire after the world*, and the things of it, than which nothing more uncertain nor more unsatisfying at the best. *This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit*; it is vanity at the best; if what he desired he obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it, but commonly the wandering desire is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to vexation of spirit.

6. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to it, and cheerfully to acquiesce in it, ver. 10. *That which has been*, or as some read it, *that which is*, and so likewise that which shall be, is named already, i. e. it is already determined in the divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed; *facta est alea*! it is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleaseth God, and let that please us.

7. Whatever we attain to in this world still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common accidents of human life. *That which has been*, and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir and such a noise in the world, is named already, he that made him gave him his name, and it is known that it is man; that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is a humbling name, Gen. v. 2. He called their name Adam; and all theirs have the same character, red earth. Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and provinces, yet he is a man still, mean, and mutable, and mortal; and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are common to men. It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are but men, Psalm ix. 6. And it is known that they are but men let them put what face they will put upon it, and like the king of Tyre set their heart at the heart of God, yet the Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known they are so.

8. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the divine providence, but must submit to the disposals of it whether we will or nor. *If it is man*, he may not contend with him that is mightier than he; it is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity; nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, for *he is in one mind*, and who can turn him? Elihu pacifies Job with this incontestible principle, that God is greater than man, Job xxxiii. 12. and therefore man may not contend with him, nor resist his judgments, when they come with commission. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against the arrests of sickness or death, but must yield to his fate.

11. ¶ Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? 12. For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Here, i. Solomon lays down his conclusion which he had undertaken to prove, as that which was fully confirmed by the foregoing discourse; *there be many things that increase vanity*; the life of man is vain at the best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so; even that which pretends to increase the wealth and pleasure, doth but increase the vanity, and make it more vexatious.

2. He draws some inferences from it, which serve further to evince the truth of it.

(1.) That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he hath in this world. *What is man the better* for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment? What remains to man? What residue has he? What overplus? What real advantage when he comes to ballance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good, or turn to account.

(2.) That we do not know what to wish for, because that which we promise ourselves most satisfaction in, often proves most vexatious to us. *Who knows what is good for a man in this life*, where every thing is vanity, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us? Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they knew it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with; so is it an instance of the vanity of this world, that what by all probable conjecture seems to be for the best, often proves otherwise; such is our short-sightedness concerning the issues and events of things, and such broken reeds are all our creature-confidences: We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act ourselves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare may become a trap.

(3.) That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of: It is to be reckoned by days, it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow, so little is there in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. If all the

the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it to constitute a happiness for us.

(1.) That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are: Since every thing is vanity, *Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?* He can no more please himself with the hopes of what shall be after him to his children and family, than with the relish of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else foretell to him what shall be after him; nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone; *his soul come to honour, and he knows it not*; so that look which way we will, *Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.*

C H A P. VII.

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world, and the things of it; now in this chapter, (1.) He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances, and the arming of ourselves against the mischief we are in danger of from them, that we may make the best of bad. - As, 1. Care of our reputation, ver. 1. 2. Seriousness, ver. 2—6. 3. Calmness of spirit, ver. 7—10. 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, ver. 11, 12. 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accommodating ourselves to every condition, ver. 13—15. 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremes, ver. 16—18. 7. Mildness and tenderness towards those that have been injurious to us, ver. 19—22. In short, the best way to save ourselves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us, is to keep our temper, and to maintain a strict government of our passions. (2.) He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, ver. 23—29

1. **A** Good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2. ¶ It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4. The heart of the wife is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wife, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

In these verses Solomon lays down some great truths, which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is, the far greatest part of mankind.

1. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world, ver. 1. *A good name is before good ointment*, so it may be read; i. e. it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. *Good ointment* is here put both for all the profits of the earth, among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable, and for all the delights of sense, for ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, and it is called *the oil of gladness*; nay, and for the high titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed. *A good name is better than all riches*, Prov. xxii. 1. i. e. a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good; *the memory of the just*; this is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go further and last longer than the most precious box of ointment; for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the gospels, Matt. xxvi. 13. and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

2. That all things considered, our going out of the world is a greater kindness to us than our coming into the world was. *The day of death* is preferable to *the birth-day*; though, as to other, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death there is lamentation; yet as ourselves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, *the day of our death*, which will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest and joy, and eternal satisfaction, is better than *the day of our birth*, which ushered us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. We were born to uncertainty, but a good man doth not die at uncertainty. *The day of our birth* clogged our souls with the burden of the flesh, but *the day of our death* will set them at liberty from that burden.

3. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral, than to go to a festival, ver. 2. *It is better to go to the house of mourning*, and there weep with them that weep, than to go to the house of feasting, to a wedding supper, or a wake, there to rejoice with them that do rejoice: It will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both as there is occasion; our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana, and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly both glorify God, and do good and get good in the house of feasting, but considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead that is there going to his long home, and the mourners that go about the streets.

The uses to be gathered from *the house of mourning* are, 1. By way of information, that it is the end of all men; it is the end of man as to this world, a final period to their state here, he shall return no more to his house; it is the end of all men, all have sinned, and therefore death passeth upon all; we must thus be left by our friends as the mourners are, and thus leave as the dead doth: What is others' lot will be ours; the cup is going round, it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly. 2. By way of admonition: *the living will lay it to his heart*: Will they? It were well if they would; they that are spiritually alive will lay it to heart, and as for all the survivors one would think they should; it is their own fault if they do not; for nothing more easy and natural than by the death of others, to be put in mind of our own. Some perhaps will lay that to heart, and consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

For the former proof of this, ver. 4. he makes it the character, 1. Of a wise man, that his heart is in the house of mourning; he is much conversant with mournful subjects: and it is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom; *the house of mourning* is the wise man's school, where he hath learned many a good lesson, and there, where he is serious, he is in his element: When he is in the house of mourning his heart is there to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is in the house of feasting his heart is in the house of mourning; by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow.

2. It is the character of a fool that his heart is in the house of mirth. his heart is all upon it to be merry and jovial, his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, and merry songs, and merry company, merry days, and merry nights: If he be at any time in the house of mourning he is under a restraint, his heart at the same time is in the house of mirth, and it is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

4. That gravity and tenderness better becomes us, and is better for us than mirth and jollity, ver. 3. The common proverb saith, that an ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow, but the preacher teacheth us a contrary lesson, that *sorrow is better than laughter*, more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning, and suffering ourselves more or less, and daily feeling the sins and sufferings of others, while we are in a vale of tears, it is fit we should conform to the temper of the climate. It is also more for our advantage, for by the sadness that appears in the countenance the heart is often made better. Note, 1. That it is best for us that is best for our souls, by which the heart is made better, though it be unpleasing to sense. 2. Sadness is often a happy means of serious self, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family, may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that, as may alter its temper very much for the better; may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty. *Vexatio dat intellectum. Perissem nisi perissem.* 3. It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicsomeness of the countenance the heart is made worse, more vain and carnal, and sensual and secure; more in love with the world, and more estranged from God and spiritual things, Job xx. 12—14. and utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of Joseph, as those Amos vi. 5, 6. and the king and Haman, Esth. iii. 15.

5. That it is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wife, than to have them gratified by the song of fools, ver. 5. Many that would be very well pleased to hear the intimation of the wife, and much more to have their commendations and consolations, yet do not care for hearing their rebukes, that is, care not for being told of their faults, though never so wisely; but therein they are no friends to themselves, for *reproofs of instruction are the ways of life*, Pr v. vi. 23. and though they be not so toothsome as the song of fools, they are more wholesome. To hear, not only with patience, but pleasure, the rebuke of the wife, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools, is a sign the mind is vain, and the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing it is for a man to do it so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise and a great blaze for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes next to nothing to the making of the pot boil, for that requires a constant fire! The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy, and is a real instance of true joy: This is also vanity, it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Our blessed Saviour hath read us our doom; *Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh; woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep*, Luke vi. 21—25.

7. ¶ Surely oppression maketh a wife man mad, and a gift destroyeth the heart. 8. Better is the end of a thing, than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. 9. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. 10. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.

Solomon had often complained before of the oppression which he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations, and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

(1.) He grants the temptation to be strong, ver. 7. Surely, it is often too true, that *oppression maketh a wife man mad*: If a wife man be much and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins on the neck of his passions, and break out into indecent complaints against God and man, or to make use of unlawful dishonourable means of relieving himself. The righteous when the rod of the wicked rests long on their lot, are in danger of putting forth their hands to iniquity, Psalm cxxv. 3. When even wife men have unreasonable hard hips put upon them, they have much ado to keep their temper and to keep their place. It destroys the heart of a gift, so the latter clause may be read, i. e. even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused and ill dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should: we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

(2.) He argues against it; let us not first at the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for,

1. The character of oppressors is very bad, so some understand, ver. 7. if he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a mad man, his reason is departed from him, he is no better than a roaring lion and a raging bear; and the gifts, the bribes he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart, and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him; and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself.

2. The issue at length will be good. *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*; by faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours, they think their power will bear them out in it, doubt not but to carry the day, and gain the point, but it will prove better in the end than it seemed in the beginning, their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocency will be both relieved and recompensed. *Better was the end of Moses' treaty with Pharaoh*, that proud oppressor, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of it, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

(3.) He arms us against him with some necessary directions. If we would not be driven mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for the proud in spirit are they that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves when they are hardly treated; that will break a proud man's heart, which will not break an humble man's sleep. Mortify pride, therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience; bearing patience, to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience, to expect the issue in God's due time. *The patient in spirit* are here opposed to the proud in spirit, for

where there is humility there will be patience, those will be thankful for any thing who own they deserve nothing at God's hand; and the patient are said to be better than the proud, they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace, *ver. 9. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry*; those that are hasty in their expectations and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not gratified presently; be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble. 1. Be not soon angry, nor quick in apprehending an affront and resenting it, not forward to express your resentments of it. 2. Be not long angry; for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it as a wayfaring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools, there it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugged as that which is dear, and laid in the bosom, and lothly parted with. He therefore that would approve himself to be wise as not to give place to the devil, must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, *Eph. iv. 26, 27.*

4. We must make the best of that which is, *ver. 10.* Take it not for granted that the former days were better than these, nor inquire what is the cause that they were so, for therein thou dost not inquire wisely, since thou inquirest into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the inquiry, and therefore thou dost not inquire wisely; nay, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world. Note, 1. It is folly to cry out of the badness of our own times, when we have more reason to cry out of the badness of our own hearts; if men's hearts were better the times would mend; and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not so, but that even in the worst of times we may enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable, but comfortable. 2. It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have, or if perhaps in some respects they had not, yet as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us; which arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in morals; God has been always good, and men always bad; and if in some respects the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps in other respects they are better.

11. ¶ Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun: 12. For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13. Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? 14. In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15. All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness. 16. Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? 17. Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? 18. It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this, yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all. 19. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise, more than ten mighty men which are in the city. 20. For there is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not. 21. Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: 22. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth, that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon in these verses recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against those distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit that there is in the things of this world.

Here are some both of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

(1.) The praises of wisdom: Many things are here said in its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom.

1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions. *Wisdom is good with an inheritance*, i. e. an inheritance is good for little without wisdom: If a man have a great estate, if it come easily to him by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them. *Wisdom is good of itself*, and makes a man useful, but if he have a good estate with it, that will put him into a greater capacity of being useful, and with his wealth he may be more serviceable to his generation than he could have been without it, and make friends to himself, *Luke xvi. 9.* *Wisdom is as good as an inheritance*, yea, better too, so the margin reads it; it is more our own, more our honour, will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account.

2. It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world; by it there is real profit to them that see the sun, both to those that have it and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to see the sun, *chap. xi. 7.* but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world, *John xi. 9.* but to them that have that advantage, unless withal they have wisdom wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eye-sight.

3. It contributes much to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble and its scorching heat; it is a shadow, so the word is, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. *Wisdom is a defence, and money*, i. e. as money is a defence: As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom a strong city. In the shadow of wisdom (so the words run) and in the shadow of money, there is safety. He puts wisdom and money

together, to confirm what he had said before, that *wisdom is good with an inheritance*: Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn-hedge, which protects the field.

4. It is joy and true happiness to a man: This is the excellency of knowledge, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, the wisdom of this world, that it gives life to them that have it. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and that is life, it prolongeth life: Men's wealth exposeth their lives, but their wisdom protects them: Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, so much better is it to get wisdom than gold!

5. It will put strength into a man, and be his stay and support, *ver. 19.* *Wisdom strengtheneth the wise*, strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens their interest, and gains them friends and reputation; it strengthens them for their services under their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, more than ten mighty men, great commanders, strengthen the city. They that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and there are safer than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

(2.) Some of the precepts of wisdom, that wisdom which will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye to God and to his hand in every thing that befalls us, *ver. 13.* *Consider the work of God.* To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them, and not open our mouths against that which is his doing: Look upon the disposal of our condition and all the circumstances of it as the work of God, and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befalls us: Consider that every work of God is wise, and just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear at last to have been for the best: Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer the designs in them. Consider the work of God, as that which we cannot make any alteration of: Who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature? If he speak trouble, who can make peace? And if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get forward? If desolating judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of providence that are concerning us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, *ver. 14.* Observe,

(1.) How the appointments and events of providence are counterchanged. In this world, at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons at one time are in great prosperity, at another time in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person, at the same time; both come from the hand of God, out of his mouth both evil and good proceed, *Isa. xlv. 7.* and he hath set the one over against the other, so that there is a very short and easy passage between them, and they are a foil to each other; day and night, summer and winter, are set the one over against the other, that in prosperity we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and in adversity may weep as though we wept not, for we may plainly see the one from the other, and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is to the end that man may find nothing after him, i. e. that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events, or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in dependence upon providence, and be ready for whatever happens. Or, that man may find nothing in the work of God which he can pretend to amend.

(2.) How we must comply with the will of God in events of both kinds. Our religion in general must be the same in all conditions, but the particular instances and exercises of it must vary as our outward condition doth, that we may walk after the Lord. 1. In a day of prosperity (and it is but a day) we must be joyful, be in good, be doing good, and getting good; maintain a holy cheerfulness, and serve the Lord with gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things. When the world smiles rejoice in God, and praise him, and let the joy of the Lord be thy strength. 2. In a day of adversity (and that is but a day too) consider: times of affliction are proper times for consideration, then God calls us to consider, *Hag. i. 5.* then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us, unless we consider why and wherefore he contends with us. And consideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, not at the saddest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, *ver. 15.* Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of providence, so as to reconcile them with the wisdom and holiness, and goodness and faithfulness of God. We must think it strange: Solomon tells us there were instances of this kind in his time, *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity*, I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as any thing. Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life the days of his vanity, for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity. Or perhaps he refers to the days of his apostasy from God, those were indeed the days of his vanity, and reflects upon this as one thing that tempted him to infidelity, or at least to indifferency in religion, that he saw just men perishing in their righteousness, that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God, nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen wicked men prolonging their lives in their wickedness, they live, become old, yea, and are mighty in power, *Job. xxi. 7.* nay, and by their fraud and violence they screen themselves from the sword of justice. Now in this consider the work of God, and let it not be a stumbling block to thee; the calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness; and the wicked, while their days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory of God and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use, both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way.

(1.) As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes; a just man may perish in his righteousness, but let him not, by his own imprudence and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon providence as dealing hardly with him, *ver. 16.* *Be not righteous overmuch*: In the acts of righteousness govern thyself by the rules of providence, and be not transported, no not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbecoming thy character, or dangerous to thine interests. Note, There may be over-doing in well-doing: Self-denial and mortification of the flesh is good; but if we prejudice

prejudice our health by it, and disfit ourselves for the service of God, we are *righteous overmuch*. To reprove those that offend is good; but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be *righteous overmuch*. Make not thyself overwise; be not opinative, and conceited of thine own abilities; set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law to and give judgment upon all about thee; set not up for a critic, to find fault with every thing that is said or done, nor busy thyself in other men's matters, as if thou knewest every thing, and couldst do any thing. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* as fools often do, by meddling with strife that belongs not to them. Why shouldst thou provoke authority, and run thyself into the briars by needless contradictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss? *Be wise as serpents!* Beware of men!

(2.) As to sinners; if it cannot prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant. It is true, *there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness*, ver. 15. but let none say, therefore they may safely be as wicked as they will; no, *he not overmuch wicked*, ver. 17. do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and the torments of hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have ever so little consideration, avoid those sins that ruin their health and estate, and expose them to public justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. *The magistrate bears not the sword in vain*, has a quick eye and a heavy hand, and is a terror to evil doers; therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law: *Why shouldst thou die before thy time?* Solomon, perhaps, in these two cautions, had a special regard to some of his own subjects, that were disaffected to his government, and were meditating the revolt which they made immediately after his death: Some, it may be, quarrelled with the sins of their governor, and made that their pretence; to them, he saith; *Be not righteous overmuch*: Others were weary of the strictness of the government and the temple-service, and that made them desirous to set up another king; but he frightens both from their seditious practices with the sword of justice, and others likewise from meddling with them that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between two extremes, and keep us always in the way of duty, which we shall find a plain and safe way, ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this*, this wisdom, this care, not to run ourselves into snares, *yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand*; never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution to maintain a due decorum and a good government of thyself; take hold of the bridle by which thy headstrong passions must be held in from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, as *the horse and mule that have no understanding*; and having taken hold of it, keep thine hold, and withdraw not thine hand from it, for if thou dost, the liberty that they will take will be *as the letting forth of water*, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious and yet be cautious, and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of religion, and thou shalt find that *he that fears God shall come forth out of all those straits and difficulties which they run themselves into: that cast off that fear*. *The fear of the Lord* is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinths. *Honesty is the best policy*; they that truly fear God have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, *Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24*.

6. Wisdom will teach us how to carry it in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute more than any thing else to the disturbance of our repose, which contradicts us both guilt and grief.

1. Wisdom teaches us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless, we ourselves are not so; none are so, no not the best. *This wisdom strengthens the wise as much as any thing*, and arms them against the danger that ariseth from provocation, ver. 19. so that they are not put into disorder by it, they consider that those they have dealings and conversation with are not incarnate angels, but sinful sons and daughters of Adam, even the best are so, inasmuch that *there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not*, ver. 20. Solomon had this in his prayer, *1 Kings viii. 46*. in his Proverbs, *Prov. xx. 9*. and here in his preaching. Note, (1.) It is the character of most men, that they *do good*; for the tree is known by its fruits. (2.) The best men, and they that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin; even those that are sanctified yet are sinners. None that live on this side heaven, live without sin; *if we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves*. (3.) We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay something offensive in our best performances. That which, for the substance of it, is good and pleasing to God, yet is not so well done as it should be, and omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions of duty. (4.) It is only just men upon earth that are subject thus to sin and infirmity; *the spirits of just men*, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness, *Heb. xii. 23*. and in heaven they *do good and sin not*.

2. Wisdom teacheth us not to be quicksighted or quickscented, in apprehending and resenting affronts; but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and make as if we do not see them, ver. 21. *Take no heed to all words that are spoken, set not thine heart to them*; vex not thyself at men's peevish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee, but be as a deaf man that hears not, *Psal. xxxviii. 13, 14*. be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride; if ill, it will stir up thy passion: See, therefore, that thou approve thyself to God and thine own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. *Hearkeners*, we say, *seldom hear good of themselves*; if thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps thou wilt hear thine own servant curse thee, when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he doth, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thine ear open to tale-bearers, *Prov. xxix. 12*. Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayest stand behind the curtain and hear it thyself, mayest hear thyself not only blamed and despised but cursed; the worst ill said of thee and wished to thee, and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the objects; nay, by thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee and protect thy good name, as well as thy other interests; perhaps it is a servant thou hast been kind to, and yet he requites thee thus ill, and this will vex thee, thou hadst better not have heard it. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast wronged and dealt unjustly with, and though he dares not tell thee so, he tells others so, and tells God so; and then thine own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uneasy. The good names of the greatest lie much at the mercy even of the meanest; and perhaps there is a great deal more evil said of us than we think there is, and by those from whom we little expected it. But we do not consult our own repose, no nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts, than avenge one.

3. Wisdom put us in mind of our own faults, ver. 27. Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee or wish ill to thee; *For oftentimes*, in that case, if thou retire into thyself thy own conscience will tell thee that *thou thyself hast cursed others*, spoken ill of them, and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thy own coin. Note, When any affront or injury is done us, it is

seasonable to examine our consciences, whether we have not done thus or as bad to others; and if, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take that occasion to renew our repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must shew all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, *Tit. iii. 2, 3*. *Matth. vii. 1, 2*. *James iii. 1, 2*.

23. ¶ All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me. 24. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? 25. I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26. And I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whose pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27. Behold, this have I found (saith the preacher) counting one by one, to find out the account: 28. Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those have I not found. 29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make men happy; now here he comes to shew the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable; and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this Book, putting on the habit of a penitent; he reviews what he had been discarding of already, and tells us what he had said was what he knew and was well assured of, and what he resolved to stand by; *all this have I proved by wisdom*, ver. 23. Now here,

1. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world, and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul; but when he came to enquire farther, he found himself at a loss; his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and though he discovered this, there were many other things he could not prove by wisdom.

(1.) His searches were industrious: God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had; and, 1. He resolved if it were possible, to gain his point; *I said I will be wise*; he earnestly desired it as highly valuable; he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable; he determined not to sit down short of it, *Prov. xviii. 1*. Many are not wise, because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon set it for the mark he aimed at. When he made trial of sensual pleasures, he still thought to *acquaint his heart with wisdom*, chap. ii. 3. and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that; but perhaps he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined to keep up his correspondence with wisdom, while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures; however, his will was good, he said *I will be wise*: And that was not all, 2. He resolved to spare no pains, ver. 25. *I applied my heart*, I and my heart turned every way; I left no stone unturned, no means untried, to compass what I had in view; I set myself to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, to accomplish myself in all useful learning, philosophy and divinity. If he had not thus closely applied himself to study, it had been but a jest for him to say *I will be wise*, for those that will attain the end, must take the right way. Solomon was a man of great quickness, and yet instead of using that (with many) as an excuse for slothfulness, he pressed it upon himself as an inducement to diligence; and the easier he found it to master a good notion, the more intent he would be that he might be master of the more good notions. Those that have the best parts, should take the greatest pains; as those that have the largest stock, should trade most. He applied himself not only to know what lay on the surface, but to search what lay hid out of the common view and road; nor did he search a little way and then give it over, because he did not presently find what he searched for, but he sought it out, went to the bottom of it; nor did he aim to know things only, but the reason of things, that he might give an account of them.

(2.) Yet his success was not answerable or satisfying. *I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me*, I could not compass it; after all, *This only I know that I know nothing*, and the more I know, the more I see there is to be known, and the more sensible I am of my own ignorance. *That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?* He means God himself, his counsels, and his works; when he searched into these, he presently found himself puzzled and run aground; he could not order his speech by reason of darkness. *It is higher than heaven, what can he do?* Job xi. 8. Blessed be God, there is nothing we have to do, but it is plain and easy; *the word is nigh us*, *Prov. viii. 9*. But there is a great deal we would wish to know, which is far off, and exceeding deep, among the secret things which belong not to us. And probably it is a culpable ignorance and error that Solomon here laments, that his pleasures and the many amusements of his court had blinded his eyes and cast a mist before them, so that he could not attain to true wisdom; as he designed.

2. He owns and laments the instances of his folly, in which he had exceeded, as in wisdom he came short.

Here is, 1, His enquiry concerning the evil of sin: He *applied his heart to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness*. Observe, (1.) The knowledge of sin is a difficult knowledge, and hard to be attained; Solomon, took pains for it. Sin has many disguises with which it palliates itself, as being loth to appear sin, and it is very hard to strip it of these, and to see it in its true nature and colours, (2.) It is necessary to our repentance for sin that we be acquainted with the evil of it, as it is necessary to the cure of a disease to know its nature, causes, and malignity. St. Paul therefore valued the divine law, because it discovered sin to him, *Rom. vii. 7*. Solomon, that in the days of his folly had set his wits on work to invent pleasures and sharpen them, and was ingenious in making provision for the flesh, now God had opened his eyes is as industrious to find out the aggravations of sin, and so to put an edge upon his repentance. Ingenious sinners should be ingenious penitents, and wit and learning, among other the spoils of the *strong man armed*, should be divided by the Lord Jesus; (3.) It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the truth is, we can never speak bad enough of it. Solomon here, for his farther humiliation,

humiliation, desired to see more; 1. Of the *sinfulness of sin*; that is it which he lays the greatest stress upon in his enquiry, to *know the wickedness of folly*; by which perhaps he means in his inquiry, the sin of unbelief; for that was commonly called *folly in Israel*, Gen. xxxiv. 7. Deut. xxii. 21. Judg. xx. 6. 2 Sam. xiii. 12. When he indulged himself in it he made a light matter of it, but now he desires to see the *wickedness of it*, its great wickedness, so Joseph speaks of it, Gen. xxxix. 9. Or it may be taken there generally for all sin. Many extenuate the sins with this, they were *folly*, but Solomon sees *wickedness* in those follies; an offence to God and a wrong to conscience, *this is wickedness*, Jer. iv. 14. Zech. v. 8. 2. Of the *folly of sin*; as there is a *wickedness in folly*, so there is a *folly in wickedness*, even foolishness and madness. Willful sinners are fools and madmen, they set contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

2. The result of this enquiry.

(1.) He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the *loving of many strange women*, 1 Kings, xi. 1. this is that which he here most feelingly laments, and in very pathetic expressions.

1. He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous; O how heavy did it lie upon his conscience, what an agony was he in upon the thought of it! the wickedness, the foolishness, the madness that he had been guilty of; *I find it more bitter than death*. As great a terror seized him in reflection upon it, as if he had been under the arrest of death. Thus do they that have their sins set in order before them by a sound conviction, cry out against them; they are bitter as gall, nay, bitter as death to all true penitents. Uncleanness is a sin that is in its own nature more pernicious than death itself. Death may be made honourable and comfortable, but this sin can be no other but shame and pain. Prov. v. 9. 11.

2. He had found the temptation to the sin very dangerous, and that it was extremely difficult and next to impossible for those that ventured into the temptation to escape the sin, and for those that had fallen into sin to recover themselves by repentance. The heart of the adulterous woman is *fiery and hot*, she plays her game to ruin souls with as much art and subtlety as ever any fowler used to take a silly bird. The methods such sinners use are both deceiving and destroying, as snares and nets are. The unwary souls are enticed into them by the bait of pleasure, which they greedily catch at, and promise themselves satisfaction in; but they are taken before they are aware, and taken irrecoverably. Her hands are as bands, with which, under colour of fond embraces, she holds those fast that she hath seized; they are *held in the cords of their own sin*, Prov. v. 22. Lust gets strength by being gratified, and its charms are more prevalent.

3. He reckoned it a great instance of God's favour to any man if by his grace he has kept him from this sin: *He that pleaseth God shall escape from her*; that he preserved either from being tempted to this sin, or from being overcome by the temptation. Those that are kept from this sin must acknowledge it is God that keeps them, and not any strength or resolution of their own, must acknowledge it a great mercy; and they that would have grace sufficient for them to arm them against this sin, must be careful to please God in every thing, by keeping his ordinances, Levit. xviii. 30.

4. He reckoned it a sin, that is, as sore a punishment of other sins as a man can fall under in this life: *The sinner shall be taken by her*, i. e. 1. Those that allow themselves in other sins, by which their minds are blinded and their consciences debauched, are the more easily drawn to this. 2. It is just with God to leave them to themselves to fall into it. See Rom. i. 26, 28. Ephes. iv. 18, 19. Thus doth Solomon, as it were with horror, bless himself from the sin in which he had plunged himself.

1. He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature. He runs up that stream to the fountain, as his father had done before him on a like occasion, Psal. li. 5. *Behold I was shapen in iniquity*.

2. He endeavoured to find out the number of his actual transgressions, ver. 27. *Behold this have I found*, i. e. this I hoped to have found, I thought I could have understood my errors and have brought in a complete list, at least of the heads of them; I thought I could have counted them one by one, and have found out the account, which as a penitent he desired to find out, that he might the more particularly acknowledge them; and generally the more particular we are in the confession of sin, the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon; and, as a preacher, that he might the more particularly give warning to others. Note, A full conviction of one sin will put us upon enquiring into the whole confederacy; and the more we see amis in ourselves, the more diligently we should enquire further in our own souls, that what we see not may be discovered to us, Job xxxiv. 32.

(2.) He now found himself at a loss, and perceived that they were innumerable, ver. 28. *which yet my soul seeketh*, I am still counting, and still desirous to find out the account, but I find not, I cannot count them all, nor find out the account of them to perfection; I still make new and amazing discoveries of the desperate wickedness that there is in my own heart, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. *who can know it? who can understand his errors? who can tell how often he offends?* Psal. xix. 12. He finds that if God enters into judgment with him, or he with himself; for all his thoughts, words and actions, he is *not able to answer for one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3. This he illustrates, by comparing the corruption of his own heart and life with the corruption of the world, where he scarce found one good man among a thousand, nay, among all the thousand wives and concubines which he had he did not find *one good woman*; even so, saith he, when I come to recollect and review my own thoughts, words, and actions, and all the passages of my life past, perhaps among those that were many I might find one good among a thousand, and that was all, the rest even of those had some corruption or other in them; he found, ver. 20. he had sinned even in doing good; but for those that were effeminate, that passed in the indulgence of his pleasures, they were all naught; in that part of his life there did not appear so much as one of a thousand good. In our hearts and lives there appears little good at the best, but sometimes none at all. Doubtless this is not intended as a sentence of the female sex in general, it is probable enough that there have been and are more good women than good men, Acts xvii. 4, 12. but he only alludes to his own sad experience; and perhaps there may be this further in it, he doth in his proverbs warn us against the snares both of the *evil man* and of the *strange woman*, Prov. ii. 12, 16—iv. 14—v. 3. Now he had observed the ways of the *evil woman* to be more deceitful and dangerous than those of the *evil men*, that it was more difficult to discover their frauds and elude their snares; and therefore he compares sin to an adulteress, Prov. ix. 13. and perceive he can no more find out the deceitfulness of his own heart than he can that of a strange woman, whose ways are moveable that thou canst not know them.

3. He therefore runs up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain of original corruption: The source and spring of all the folly and madness that is in the world is in man's apostasy from God, and his degeneracy from his primitive rectitude, ver. 29. *Lo, this only have I found*; when I could not find out the particulars yet the gross account was manifest enough, it is as clear as the sun, that man is corrupted and revolted, and is not as he was made. Observe,

1. How man was made: by the wisdom and goodness of God: *God made*

man upright; Adam the first man, so the Chaldee. God made him, and he made him *upright*; i. e. such a one as he should be, being made a rational creature, he was in all respects such a one as a rational creature should be, *upright*, with out any irregularity, one could find no fault in him: he was *upright*, i. e. determined to God only, in opposition to the *many inventions* which he afterwards turned aside to. Man as he came out of God's hands was (as we may say) a little picture of his Maker, who is *good and upright*.

2. How he was married, and in effect unmade by his own folly and badness: *They have sought out many inventions*; they i. e. our first parents, or the whole race, all in general, and every one in particular. *They have sought out great inventions*, i. e. some; inventions to become great as gods, Gen. iii. 5. Or, *the inventions of the great ones*, so some; i. e. of the angels that fell, the *Magnates*. Or, *many inventions*; man instead of resting in what God had found for him, was for seeking to mend himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house to go seek his fortune. Instead of being for one he was for many; instead of being for God's institutions he was for his own inventions. The laws of his creation would not hold him, but he would be at his own disposal, and follow his own sentiments and inclinations. *Vain man would be wife*, wiser than his Maker; is giddy and unsettled in his pursuits, and therefore has *many inventions*. They that forsake God wander endlessly. Men's actual transgressions are multiplied: Solomon could not find out how many they are, ver. 28. but he found they were *very many*. Many kinds of sins, and those often repeated; *they are more than the hairs on our heads*, Psal. xl. 12.

C H A P. VIII.

Solomon in this chapter comes to recommend wisdom to us, as the most powerful antidote against both the temptations and vexations that arise from the vanity of the world. Here is, 1. The benefit and praise of wisdom, ver. 3. 2. Some particular instances of wisdom prescribed to us. (1.) *We must keep in due subjection to the government God hath set over us*, ver. 2—5. (2.) *We must get ready for sudden evils, and especially for sudden death*, ver. 6—8. (3.) *We must arm ourselves against the temptation of an oppressive government, and not think it strange*, ver. 9. 10. *The impunity of oppressors makes them more daring*, ver. 11. *but in the issue it will be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked*, ver. 12, 13. *and therefore the present prosperity of the wicked and afflictions of the righteous ought not to be a stumbling-block to us*, ver. 14. (4.) *We must cheerfully use the gifts of God's providence*, ver. 15. (5.) *We must with an entire satisfaction acquiesce in the will of God, and not pretending to find the bottom, we must humbly and silently adore the depth of his unsearchable counsels, being assured they are all wise, and just, and good*, ver. 16, 17.

1. **WHO** is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed. 2. I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God. 3. Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing, for he doth whatsoever pleaseth him. 4. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What dost thou? 5. Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

Here is, 1. An encomium of wisdom, ver. 1. that is, of true piety, guided in all its exercises by prudence and discretion; the wise man is the good man, that knows God and glorifies him, knows himself and doth well for himself: his wisdom is a great happiness to him; for,

(1.) It advanceth him above his neighbours, and makes him more excellent than they. *Who is as the wise man?* Note, Heavenly wisdom will make a man an incomparable man. No man without grace, though he be learned, or noble, or rich, is to be compared with a man that has true grace, and is therefore accepted of God.

(2.) It makes him useful among his neighbours, and very serviceable to them: *who* but the *wise man knoweth the interpretation of a thing?* i. e. understands the times and the events of them, and their critical junctures, so as to direct *what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chron. xii. 32.

(3.) It beautifies a man in the eyes of his friends: *It makes his face to shine*, as Moses's did when he came down from the mount, it puts an honour upon a man, and a lustre on his whole conversation, makes him to be regarded and taken notice of, and gains him respect, as Job xxix. 7, &c. it makes him lovely and amiable, and the darling and blessing of his country. *The strength of his face*, i. e. the firmness and severity of his countenance (so some understand the last clause) *shall be changed* by it into that which is sweet and obliging: Even those whose natural temper is rough and marose, by wisdom are strangely altered, and become mild and gentle, and learn to look pleasant.

(4.) It emboldens a man against his adversaries, their attempts and contempts: *The boldness of his face shall be doubled* by wisdom, it will add very much to his courage in maintaining his integrity, when he not only hath an honest cause to plead, but by his wisdom knows how to manage it, and where to find the interpretation of a thing: *He shall not be rebuffed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate*.

2. A particular instance of wisdom pressed upon us, and that is subjection to authority, and a dutiful and peaceable perseverance in our allegiance to the government which providence hath set over us. Observe,

(1.) How the duty of subjects is here described:

1. We must be observant of the laws. In all those things wherein the civil power is to interpose, whether legislative or judicial, we ought to submit to its order and constitution. *I counsel thee*, it may as well be supplied, *I charge thee*, not only as a prince but a preacher, he might do both, I recommend it to thee as a piece of wisdom, I say, whatever those say that are given to change, *keep the king's commandment*; wherever the sovereign power is lodged be subject to it. *Observe the mouth of a king*, so the phrase is, say as he saith, do as he bids thee; let his word be a law, or rather let the law be his word. So we understand the following clause as a limitation of this obedience; *keep the king's commandment*, yet so as to have a regard to the oath of God, i. e. so as to keep a good conscience, and not to violate thy obligations to God, which are prior and superior to thine obligations to the king. *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*, but so as to reserve pure and intire to God the things that are his.

2. We

2. We must not be forward to find fault with the public administration, or quarrel with every thing that is not just according to our mind, nor quit our post of service under the government, and throw it up upon every discontent, ver. 3. *Be not hasty to go out of his sight* when he is displeased at thee, chap. x. 4. or when thou art displeased at him: fly not off in a passion, nor entertain such jealousies of him as will tempt thee to renounce the court or forsake the kingdom. Solomon's subjects as soon as his head was laid went directly contrary to this rule, when upon the rough answer which Rehoboam gave them they were *hasty to go out of his sight*, would not take time for second thoughts, nor admit proposals of accommodation, but cried, *To your tents, O Israel*. There may perhaps be a just cause for to go out of his sight, but be not hasty to do it; act with great deliberation.

3. We must not persist in a fault when it is shewed us; *stand not in an evil thing*; in any offence thou hast given to thy prince humble thyself, and do not justify thyself, for that will make the offence much more offensive: in any ill design thou hast upon some discontent conceived against thy prince, do not proceed in it, but if thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, Prov. xxx. 32. Note, Though we may by surprise be drawn into an evil thing, yet ye must not stand in it, but recede from it as soon as it appears to us to be evil.

4. We must prudently accommodate ourselves to our opportunities, both for our own relief if we think ourselves wronged, and for the redress of public grievances. *A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgement*, ver. 5. i. e. it is the wisdom of subjects in applying themselves to their princes, to enquire and consider both at what season and in what manner they may do it best and most effectually, to pacify his anger, obtain his favour, or obtain the revocation of any grievousness prescribed. Esther in dealing with Ahasuerus took a deal of pains to discern both time and judgement, and it sped accordingly. This may be taken as a general rule of wisdom, that every thing should be well timed; and our enterprises are then likely to succeed when we nick the opportunity for them.

(2.) What arguments are here used to engage us to be subject to the higher powers; they are much the same with those which St. Paul useth, Rom. xiii. 1. &c.

1. *We must needs be subject for conscience sake*, and that is the most powerful principle of subjection; we must be subject because of the oath of God, i. e. the oath of allegiance which we have taken to be faithful to the government; the covenant between the king and the people, 1 Chron. xxiii. 16. *David made a covenant or contract with the elders of Israel*, though he was king by divine designation, 1 Chron. xi. 3. *Keep the commandments*, for he hath sworn to rule thee in the fear of God, and thou hast sworn in that fear to be faithful to him. It is called the oath of God because he is a witness to it, and will avenge the violation of it.

2. *For wrath's sake*; because of the sword which the prince bears, and the power he is intrusted with, which make him very formidable: *He doth whatsoever pleaseth him*, i. e. he hath a great authority, and a great ability to support that authority, ver. 4. *Where the word of a king is*, giving orders to seize a man, *there is power*, there are enow that will execute his orders, which makes the wrath of a king, or supreme government, like the roaring of a lion, and like messengers of death; *who may say unto him, What dost thou?* i. e. he that contradicts him it is at his peril: kings will not bear to have their orders disputed, but expect they should be obeyed: in short it is dangerous contending with sovereignty, and what many have repented. A subject is an unequal match for a prince: he may command me that has legions at command.

3. *For the sake of our own comfort*. *Who keepeth the commandment and lives a quiet and peaceable life, he shall feel no evil thing*, to which that of the apostle answers, Rom. xiii. 4. *Wilt thou not then be afraid of the power of the king?* *Do that which is good*, as becomes a dutiful and loyal subject, and thou shalt ordinarily have praise of the same. He that doth no ill shall feel no ill, and needs fear none.

6. ¶ Because to every purpose there is time, and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him. 7. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? 8. *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit*; neither hath he power in the day of death; and *there is no discharge in that war*; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

Solomon had said, ver. 5. that a wise man's heart discerneth times and judgment, i. e. a man's wisdom will go a great way by the blessing of God in moral prognostications; but here he shews that few have that wisdom, and that even the wisest may yet be surprised by a calamity which they had not any foresight of, and therefore it is our wisdom to expect and prepare for sudden changes. Observe,

1. All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom. *To every purpose there is a time* prefixed, and it is the best time, for it is time and judgment, time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness, the appointment is not chargeable with folly or iniquity.

2. We are very much in the dark concerning future events, and the time and season of them. *Man knows not that which shall be himself*, and *who can tell him when or how it shall be?* ver. 7. It cannot either be foreseen by him or foretold to him; the stars cannot foretell a man what shall be, nor any of the arts of divination; God hath in wisdom concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes.

3. It is our great unhappiness and misery that because we cannot foresee an evil, we know not how to avoid it, or guard against it; and because we are not aware of the proper successful season of actions, therefore we lose our opportunities and miss our way, *Because to every purpose there is but one way*, one method, one proper opportunity, *therefore the misery of man is great upon him*, because it is so hard to hit that, and it is a thousand to one but he misseth it. Most of the miseries men labour under had been prevented if they could have been foreseen, and the happy time discovered to avoid them; men are miserable because they do not look to their hits.

4. Whatever other evils may be avoided, we are all under a fatal necessity of dying, ver. 8.

1. When the soul is required it must be resigned, and it is to no purpose to dispute it, either by arms or arguments; not ourselves, or any friend we have for us: *There is no man that has power over his own spirit to retain it*, when it is summoned to return to God who gave it: it cannot fly any where out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its writs do nor run: it cannot abscond so as to escape death's eye, though it is hid from the eyes of all living; a man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or bribes obtain a reprieve; no bail will be taken, no assign, protection or imparlance allowed. We have not power

over the spirit of a friend; to retain that; the prince with all his authority cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects, nor the physician with his medicines and methods, nor the soldier with his force, nor the orator with his eloquence, nor the self-saint with his intercession: the stroke of death can by no means be put by, when our days are determined and the hour appointed us is come.

2. Death is an enemy that we must all enter the lists with sooner or later, *there is no discharge in that war*; that is, no dimission from it, either of the men of business or of the faint-hearted, as there was among the Jews, Deut. xx. 5-8. While we live we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harm's till we put off the body, never obtain a discharge till death has obtained the mastery; the youngest is not released as a fresh-water soldier, nor the oldest as *miles emeritus*. Death is a battle that must be fought, *there is no sending to that war*, so some read it; no substituting another for us, no champion admitted to fight for us; we must ourselves engage, and are concerned to provide accordingly, as for a battle.

3. Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrest of death; nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors: though he *strengthens himself* never so much in his wickedness, Psalm lii. 7. death will be too strong for him; the most subtil wickedness cannot outwit death, nor the most impudent wickedness outbrave death: nay, the wickedness which men give themselves to will be so far from delivering them from death, that it will deliver them up to death.

9. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun; *there is a time* wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt. 10. And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*: therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 12. ¶ Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: 13. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days which are as a shadow: because he feareth not before God.

Solomon in the beginning of the chapter had warned us against having any thing to do with seditious subjects, here in these verses he encourageth us in reference to the mischief of tyrannical and oppressive rulers, such as he had complained of before, chap. iii. 16-iv. 1.

1. He had observed many such rulers, ver. 9. In the serious views and reviews he had taken of the children of men and their state he had observed that many a time *one man rules over another to his hurt*; that is, 1. To the hurt of the ruled, many understand it so; whereas they ought to be God's minister, unto their subjects for their good, Rom. xiii. 4. to administer justice and to preserve the public peace and order, they use their power for their hurt, to invade their property, encroach upon their liberty, and to patronize the acts of injustice. It is sad with a people when those that should protect their religion and rights aim at the destruction of both. 2. To the hurt of the ruler, for we render it; to their own hurt, to the feeding of their pride and covetousness, the gratifying of their passion and revenge, and so to the filling up of the measure of their sins, and the hastening and aggravating of their ruin; what hurt men do to others will return in the end to their own hurt: *Agents agendo repetitur*.

2. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power, ver. 10. *I saw those wicked rulers come and go from the place of the holy*; go in state to and return in pomp from the place of judgement, which is called the place of the Holy One, because the judgment is the Lord's, Deut. i. 17. and he judgeth among the gods, Psal. lxxxii. 1. and is with them in the judgment, 2 Chron. xix. 6. and they continued all their days in office, were never reckoned with for their mal-administration, but died in honour, and were buried magnificently; their commissions were *durante vita*, and not *quandiu se bene gesserint*; and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; their wicked practices were not remembered against them to their reproach and infamy when they were gone. Or rather, it notes the vanity of their dignity and power, for that is his remark upon it in the close of the verse, *This is all vanity*: they are proud of their wealth, and power, and honour, because they sit in the place of the holy, but all this cannot secure, 1. Their bodies from being buried in the dust: *I saw them laid in the grave*, and their pomp, though it attended them thither, could not descend after them, Psalm xlix. 17. 2. Nor their names from being buried in oblivion, for they were forgotten, as if they had never been.

3. He had observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness, ver. 11. It is true of all sinners in general, and particularly of wicked rulers, that *because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily*, they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance, and their hearts are full of them to do evil, they venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit iniquity with a high hand. Observe, 1. Sentence is past against evil works and evil workers, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, even against the evil works of princes and great men, as well as of inferior persons. 2. The execution of this sentence is oftentimes delayed a great while, and the sinner goes on not only unpunished, but prosperous and successful. 3. Impunity hardens sinners in impiety, and the patience of God is shamefully abused by many, who, instead of being led by it to repentance, are confirmed by it in their impenitency. 4. Sinners herein deceive themselves, for though the sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed the more severely at last: vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely; and wrath is in the mean time treasured up against the day of wrath.

4. He foresaw such an end of all these things as would be sufficient to keep us from quarrelling with the divine providence upon account of them. He supposeth a wicked ruler to do an unjust thing a hundred times, and that yet his punishment is deferred, and God's patience towards him is prolonged much beyond what was expected, and the days of his power are lengthened out, so that he continues to oppress; yet be not discouraged.

(1.) God's people are certainly a happy people, though they be oppressed, *it shall be well with them that fear God*, I say, with all them, and them only, which fear before him. Note, 1. It is the character of God's people that they fear God, have an awe of him upon their hearts, and make conscience of their duty to him; and this because they see his eye always upon them, and they know it is their concern to approve themselves to him: when

when they lie at the mercy of proud oppressors, they fear God more than they fear them: they do not quarrel with the providence of God, but submit to it. 2. It is the happiness of all that fear God, that in the worst of times it shall be well with them; their happiness in God's favour cannot be prejudiced, nor their communion with God interrupted by their troubles; they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles, and in the end they should have a blessed deliverance from and an abundant recompense for their troubles: and therefore surely I know, I know it by the promise of God, and the experience of all saints, that, however it goes with others, it shall go well with them. All is well that ends well.

(2.) Wicked people are certainly a miserable people; though they prosper and prevail for a time, the curse is as sure to them as the blessing is to the righteous: *It shall not be well with the wicked*, as others think it is who judge by outward appearance, and as they themselves expect it will be; nay, *sure to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*, *Isai. iii. 10, 11.* they shall be reckoned with for all the ill they have done; nothing that befalls them shall be really well for them. *Nihil potest ad malos pervenire quod profsit* *imo nihil quod non noceat.* Seneca. Note, 1. The wicked man's days are as a shadow, not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unprofitable. A good man's days have some substance in them; he lives to good purpose; a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. 2. These days shall not be prolonged to what he promised himself; he shall not live out half his days, *Psal. lv. 23.* Though they may be prolonged, ver. 12. beyond what others expected, yet his day shall come to fall: he shall fall short of everlasting life, and then his long life on earth will be worth little. 3. God's great quarrel with wicked people is for their not fearing before him; that is at the bottom of their wickedness, and cuts them off from all happiness.

14. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said, that this also is vanity. 15. Then I commend mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour, the days of his life which God giveth him under the sun. 16. ¶ When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes.) 17. Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Wise and good men have of old been perplexed with this difficulty, how the prosperity of the wicked and the troubles of the righteous can be reconciled with the holiness and goodness of the God that governs the world; concerning this Solomon here gives us his advice.

1. He would not have us to be surprised at it, as though some strange thing happened, for he himself saw it in his days, *ver. 14.* (1.) He saw just men, to whom it happened according to the work of the wicked, who notwithstanding their righteousness suffered very hard things, and continued long to do so, as if they were to be punished for some great wickedness. (2.) He saw wicked men to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous, who prospered as remarkably as if they had been rewarded for some good deed; and these from themselves, from God, from men. We see the just troubled and perplexed in their own minds, the wicked easy, fearless, and secure; the just crossed and afflicted by the divine providence, the wicked prosperous, successful and smiled upon; the just censured and reproached, and run down by the higher powers, the wicked applauded and preferred.

2. He would have us to take occasion from hence, not to charge God with iniquity, but to charge the world with vanity: no fault is to be found with God, but as to the world, that is vanity upon earth, and again, *this is also vanity*, i. e. it is a certain evidence that the things of this world are not the best things, nor were ever designed to make a portion and happiness for us, for if they had, God would not have allotted so much of this world's wealth to his worst enemies, and so much of its troubles to his best friends; there must therefore be another life after this, the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy or truly miserable, for this world doth neither.

3. He would have us not to fret and perplex ourselves about it, or make ourselves uneasy, but cheerfully to enjoy what God hath given us in the world, to be content with it, and make the best of it, though it be much better with others, and such as we think very unworthy, *ver. xv.* Then I commended joy, a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God and his power, providence, and promises, *because a man hath no better thing under the sun* (though a good man has much better things above the sun) *than to eat and drink*, that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life according as his rank is, and to be cheerful, whatever happens, for that shall abide with him of his labour, that is all the fruit he hath for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world, let him therefore take it, and much good may it do him; and let him not deny himself that, out of a peevish discontent because the world doth not go as he would have it; that shall abide with him, during the days of his life which God giveth him under the sun. Our present life is a life under the sun, but we look for the life of the world to come, which will commence and continue when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and shine no more. This present life must be reckoned by days; this life is given us, and the days of it allotted to us, by the counsel of God, and therefore while it doth last we must accommodate ourselves to the will of God, and study to answer the ends of our life.

4. He would not have us undertake to give a reason for that which God doth, for his way is in the sea, and his path on the great waters, past finding out, and therefore we must be contentedly and piously ignorant of the meaning of God's proceedings in the government of the world, *ver. 16, 17.* Here he shews,

(1.) That both he himself and many others had, very closely studied the point, and searched far into the reason of the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous; he for his part had applied his heart to know this wisdom, and to see the business that is done, by the divine providence, upon the earth, to find out if there were any certain scheme, any

constant rule or method, by which the affairs of this lower world were administered, any course of government sure and steady as the course of nature, so that by what is done now we might as certainly foretell what will be done next, as by the moon's changing now we can foretell when it will be at the full: this he would fain have found out. Others had likewise set themselves to make this enquiry with so close an application that they could not find time for sleep; either day or night, nor find in their hearts to sleep, so full of anxiety were they about these things! some think Solomon speaks of himself, that he was so eager in prosecuting this great enquiry that he could not keep them from thinking of it.

(2.) That it was all labour in vain, *ver. 17.* When we look upon all the works of God and his providence, and compare one part with another, we cannot find that there is any such certain method by which the work that is done under the sun is directed, we cannot discover any key by which to decipher the character, nor by consulting precedents can we know the practice of this court, nor what the judgment will be. 1. Though a man be never so industrious, though he labour to seek it out; 2. Though he be never so ingenious, though he be a wise man in other things, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves, and trace them by their footsteps; nay, 3. Though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it, yet he shall not, he cannot find it out: God's ways are above ours, nor he is tied to his own former ways, but his judgments are a great deep.

C H A P. IX.

Solomon in this chapter for a further proof of the vanity of this world, gives us four observations which he had made upon a survey of the state of the children of men in it. 1. He observed, that commonly as to outward things good and bad men fare much alike, *ver. 1—3.* 2. That death puts a final period to all our employments and enjoyments in this world, *ver. 4—6.* from whence he infers that it is our wisdom to enjoy the comforts of life, and mind the business of life while it doth last, *ver. 7—10.* 3. That God's providence crosseth the fairest and most hopeful probabilities of men's endeavour, and great calamities often surprise men ere they are aware, *ver. 11—12.* 4. That wisdom often makes men very useful and yet gains them little respect, but persons of great merit are slighted, *ver. 13—18.* And what is there then in this world that should make us fond of it?

1. **F**OR all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love, or hatred, by all that is before them. 2. All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. 3. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, and there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

It has been observed concerning those who have pretended to search for the philosopher's stone, that though they could never find what they sought for, yet in the search they have hit upon many other useful discoveries and experiments: Thus Solomon, when in the close of the foregoing chapter he applied his heart to know the work of God, and took a great deal of pains to search into it, though he despaired of finding it out, yet he found out that which abundantly recompensed him for the search, and gave him some satisfaction, which here he gives us; for therefore he considered all this in his heart, and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare it for the good of others. Note, What we are to declare we should first consider, think twice before we speak once; and what we have considered we should then declare: *I believed, therefore have I spoken.*

The great difficulty which Solomon met with in studying the book of providence, was the little difference that is made between good men and bad in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the disposal of events; this has perplexed the minds of many wise and contemplative men; Solomon discourseth of it in these verses, and though he doth not undertake to find out this work of God, yet he saith that which may prevent its being a stumbling-block to us.

1. Before he describes the temptation in its strength, he lays down a great and unquestionable truth, which he resolves to stick to, and which, if firmly believed, will be sufficient to break the force of the temptation: This hath been the way of God's people in grappling with this difficulty. Job, before he discourseth of this matter, lays down the doctrine of God's omniscience, *Job xxiv. 1.* Jeremiah the doctrine of his righteousness, *Jer. xii. 1.* Another prophet that of his holiness, *Hab. i. 3.* The psalmist that of his goodness and peculiar favour to his own people, *Psal. lxxiii. 1.* and that is it which Solomon here fastens upon and resolves to abide by, that though good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously, yet God has a particular care of and concern for his own people; *The righteous and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God*, under his special protection and conduct; all their affairs are managed by him for their good; all their wise and righteous actions are in his hand, to be recompensed in the other world, though not in this. They seem as if they were given up into the hand of their enemies, but it is not so; men have no power against them but what is given them from above; the events concerning them do not come to pass by chance, but all according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us easy whatever happens, that all God's saints are in his hand, *Deut. xxxiii. 3.* *John x. 29.* *Psal. xxxi. 15.*

2. He lays this down for a rule, that the love and hatred of God is not to be measured and judged of by men's outward condition. If prosperity were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of his hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the matter is not so; no man knows either love, or hatred, by all that is before them in this world, by those things that are the objects of sense. These we may know by that which is within us, if we love God with all our heart, thereby we may know that he loves us; as we know likewise that we are under his wrath, if we be governed by that carnal mind which is enmity to him; these will be known by that which shall be hereafter, by men's everlasting state; it is certain men are happy or miserable according as they are under the love or hatred of God, but not according as they are under the smiles or frowns of the world; and therefore if God loves a righteous

righteous man, as certainly he doth, he is happy though the world frown upon him; and if he hate a wicked man, as certainly he doth, he is miserable though the world smile upon him; then is the offence of this promiscuous distribution of events ceased.

3. Having laid down these principles, he acknowledgeth that *all things come alike to all*; so it has been formerly, and therefore we are not to think it strange if it be so now, if it be so with us and our families. Some make this and all that follows to *ver. 13.* to be the perverse reasonings of the atheists against the doctrine of God's providence, but I rather take it to be Solomon's concession, which he might the more freely make when he had fixed those truths which are sufficient to guard against any ill use that may be made of what he grants. Observe here, *ver. 2.*

(1.) The great difference that there is between the characters of the righteous and the wicked, which in several instances are set the one over-against the other, to shew that though *all things come alike to all*, yet that doth not in the least confound the eternal distinction between moral good and evil, but that remains immutable. 1. The righteous are *clean*, have *clean hands and pure hearts*; the wicked are *unclean*, under the dominion of unclean lusts, *pure perhaps in their own eyes*, but not *cleansed from their filthiness*. God will certainly put a difference between the *clean and the unclean, the precious and the vile*, in the other world, though he doth not seem to do so in this. 2. The righteous *sacrifice*, i. e. they make conscience of worshipping God according to his will, both with inward and outward worship; the wicked *sacrifice not*, they live in the neglect of God's worship, and grudge to part with any thing for his honour: *What is the Almighty that they should serve him?* 3. The righteous are *good*, good in God's sight, they do good in the world; the wicked are *sinners*, violating the laws of God and man, and provoking to both. 4. The wicked man *swears*, has no veneration for the name of God, but profanes it by swearing rashly and swearing falsely; but the righteous man *fears an oath*, swears not, but is sworn, and then with great reverence; he fears to take an oath, because it is a solemn appeal to God as a witness and a judge; he fears when he has taken an oath to break it, because God is righteous who taketh vengeance.

(2.) The little difference there is between the conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world; *there is one event to both*: Is David rich? so is Nabal: Is Joseph favoured by his prince? so is Haman. One bad event: Is Ahab killed in a battle? so is Josiah: Are the bad figs carried to Babylon? so are the good, *Jer. xxiv. 1.* There is a vast difference between the original, the design, and the nature of the same event to the one and to the other, the effects and issues of them are likewise vastly different; the same providence to the one is *a favour of life unto life*, to the other of *death unto death*, though to outward appearance it is the same.

4. He owns this to be a very great grievance to those that are wise and good. *This is an evil*, the greatest perplexity, *among all things that are done under the sun*, *ver. 3.* nothing has given me more disturbance than this, *that there is one event unto all*: It hardens atheists, and strengthens the hands of evil doers; for therefore it is that *the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil*, and *fully set in them to do evil*, chap. viii. 11. When they see that *there is one event to the righteous and the wicked*, they wickedly infer from thence, that it is all one to God whether they are righteous or wicked, and therefore they stick at nothing to gratify their lusts.

5. For the further clearing of this great difficulty, as he began this discourse with the doctrine of the happiness of the righteous, whatever they may suffer, *they and their works are in the hands of God*, and therefore in good hands, they could not be in better; so he concludes with the doctrine of the misery of the wicked, however they may prosper, *madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead*. Envy not the prosperity of evil doers, for, (1.) They are now madmen, and all the delights they seem to be blessed with are but like the pleasant dreams and fancies of a distracted man. They are *mad upon their idols*, *Jer. l. 28.* are mad against God's people, *Acts xxvi. 11.* When the prodigal repented, it is said *he came to himself*, *Luke xv. 17.* which intimates that he had been beside himself before. (2.) They will shortly be dead men. They make a mighty noise and bustle *while they live*, but after a while *they go to the dead*, and there is an end of all their pomp and power; they will then be reckoned with for all their madness and outrage in sin. Though on this side death the righteous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side death there will be a vast difference between them.

4. ¶ For to him that is joined to all the living, there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. 7. ¶ Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. 8. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. 9. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.

Solomon in a fret had *praised the dead more than the living*, chap. iv. 2. but here considering the advantages of life to prepare for death, and make sure the hope of a better life, he seems to be of another mind.

(1.) He shews the advantages which the living have above those that are dead, *ver. 4, 5, 6.*

1. While there is life, *there is hope*. *Dum spiro, spero.* It is the privilege of the living that they are *joined to the living*, in relation, commerce, and conversation, and while they are so *there is hope*: If a man's condition be upon any account bad, *there is hope* it will be amended; if *the heart be full of evil*, and *madness be in it*, yet while there is life *there is hope*, that by the grace of God there may be a blessed change wrought; but after men go to the dead, *ver. 3.* it is too late then; he that is then filthy will be filthy still, for ever filthy. If men be thrown aside as useless, yet while they are *joined to the living there is hope*; that they may yet again take root and bear fruit; he that is alive is or may be good for something, but he that is dead

as to this world, is not capable of being any further serviceable; therefore *a living dog is better than a dead lion*, i. e. the meanest beggar alive as that comfort of this world, and doth that service to it, which the greatest prince when he is dead is utterly incapable of.

2. While there is life there is an opportunity of preparing for death. *The living know* that which the dead have no knowledge of, particularly they *know that they shall die*, and are or may be thereby influenced to prepare for that great change which will come certainly, and may come suddenly. Note, *The living cannot but know that they shall die*, that they must needs die; they know they are under a sentence of death; they are already taken into custody of its messengers, and feel themselves declining: This is a needful, useful knowledge; for what is our business while we live, but to get ready to die? *The living know they shall die*; it is a thing yet to come, and therefore provision may be made for it; *the dead know they are dead*, and it is too late, they are on the other side the great gulf fixed.

3. When life is gone, all this world is gone with it as to us. (1.) There is an end of all our acquaintance with this world, and the things of it; *the dead know not any thing* of that, which while they lived they were intimately conversant with: It doth not appear that they know any thing of what is done by those they leave behind. Abraham is ignorant of us; they are removed *into darkness*, *Job. x. 22.* (2.) There is an end of all our enjoyments in this world: *They have no more a reward* for their toils about the world, but all they got must be left to others; they have a reward for their holy actions, but not for their worldly ones; the meats and the belly will be destroyed together, *John vi. 27.* *1 Cor. vi. 13.* It is explained, *ver. 6.* *Neither have they any more a portion for ever*, none of that which they imagined would be a *portion for ever*, of that which is done and got *under the sun*. The things of this world will not be a portion for the dead, because they will not be a portion for ever; they that choose them and have them for *their good things*, have only a *portion in this life*, *Psal. xvii. 14.* The world can only be an annuity for life, not a *portion for ever*. (3.) There is an end of their name; there are but few whose names survive them long, the grave is a land of forgetfulness, *for the memory of them that are laid there is soon forgotten*; their *place knows them no more*, nor the lands they called by their own names. (4.) There is an end of their affections, their friendships and enmities: *Their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished*; the good things they loved, the evil things they hated, the prosperity of others which they envied, are now all at end with them: Death parts those that loved one another, and puts an end to their friendship; and those that hated one another too, and puts an end to their quarrels. *Adio moritur cum persona.* There we shall be never the better for our friends, their love can do us no kindness, nor ever the worse for our enemies, their hatred and envy can do us no damage. *There the wicked cease from troubling*. Those things which now so affect us and fill us, which we are so concerned about and so jealous of will there be at an end.

(2.) From hence he infers that it is our wisdom to make the best use of life that we can while it doth last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

1. Let us relish the comforts of life while we live, and cheerfully take our share of the enjoyments of it. Solomon having been himself intempered by the abuse of sensitive delights, warns others of the danger, not by a total prohibition of them, but by directing to the sober and moderate use of them; we may use the world, but must not abuse it; take what is to be had out of it, and expect no more.

Here is, (1.) The particular instances of this cheerfulness prescribed. Thou that art drooping and melancholy, *go thy way like a fool as thou art*, and get into a better temper of mind.

1. Let thy spirit be easy and pleasant, then let there be *joy and a merry heart* within; *a good heart*, so the word is; which distinguisheth this from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which is the evil of the heart, both a symptom and a cause of much evil there; we must enjoy ourselves, enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience, that nothing may disturb us in these enjoyments: We must serve God with gladness in the use of what he gives us, and be liberal in communicating of it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with inordinate care and grief about the world. We must eat our bread as Israelites, *not in our mourning*, *Deut. xxvi. 11.* as christians, *with gladness and liberality of heart*, *Acts. ii. 46.* See *Deut. xxviii. 47.*

2. Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God hath given thee; *eat thy bread, drink thy wine*, thine, not another's; not *the bread of deceit*, or *the wine of violence*, but that which is honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort, nor expect a blessing upon it. *Thy bread and thy wine*, i. e. such as is agreeable to thy place and station, not extravagantly above it, nor sordidly below it; lay out what God has given thee for the ends for which thou art intrusted with it, as being but a reward.

3. Evidence thy cheerfulness, *ver. 8.* *Let thy garments be always white*; observe a proportion in thine expences, and let the back and the belly each have their just share; pinch not thy belly to feed thy pride, as some do; nor starve thy back to feed thy luxury, as others do: Be neat, wear clean linen, and be not slovenly. Or, *Let thy garments be white*, in token of joy and cheerfulness, which was expressed *white raiment*, *Rev. iii. 4.* and as a further token of joy, *let thy head lack no ointment* that is fit for it; our Saviour admitted this piece of pleasure at a feast, *Matt. xxvi. 7.* and David observes it among the gifts of God's bounty to him, *Psal. xxiii. 5.* *Thou anointest my head with oil*: Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must make as comfortable an use of as we can afford, under the limitations of sobriety and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor.

4. Make thyself agreeable to thy relations; *live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest*; do not ingross thy delights, making much of thyself only, and not caring what becomes of those about thee, but let them share with thee, and make them easy too. Have a wife; for even in paradise *it was not good for man to be alone*. Keep to thy wife, to one, and do not multiply wives; Solomon had found the mischief of that; to her only; and have nothing to do with any other: How can a man live joyfully with one with whom he doth not live honestly? Love thy wife; and *the wife whom thou lovest* thou wilt be likely to *live joyfully with*: When we do the duty of relations, we may expect the comfort of them. See *Prov. v. 19.* Live with thy wife, and delight in her society; *live joyfully with her*, and be most merry when thou art with her: Take pleasure in thy family, thy vine and thine olive plants.

(2.) The qualifications necessary to this cheerfulness; Rejoice and have a merry heart, if God now accepteth thy works: If thou art reconciled to God, and recommended to him, then thou hast reason to be cheerful, otherwise not: *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God*, *Hos. ix. 1.* Our first care must be to make our peace with God and obtain his favour, to do that which he will accept of, and then, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy*. Note, those whose works God has accepted have reason to be cheerful, and ought to be so. Now thou eatest the bread of thy sacrifices *with joy*, and partakest of the wine of thy drink offerings *with a merry heart*, now God accepteth thy works; thy religious

religious services, when performed with holy joy, are pleasing to God; he loves to have his servants sing at their work, it proclaims him a good master.

(3.) The reasons for it. Live joyfully, for,

1. It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable. *This days of thy life* are the days of *thy vanity*, there is nothing here but trouble and disappointment, thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore *live joyfully* while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow, *sufficient to the day is the evil thereof*. Let a gracious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world.

2. It is all thou canst get from this world, *that is thy portion in the things of this life*; in God and another life thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompence for thy labours in religion, but for thy pains *which thou takest* about the things *under the sun*, this is all thou canst expect, and therefore do not deny this to thyself.

3. Let us apply ourselves to the business of life while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it as by them to be fitted for the employments; therefore *eat with joy and a merry heart*, not that thy soul may take its ease, as *Luke xii. 19.* but that thy soul may take the more pains, and the joy of the Lord may be its strength, and oil to its wheels, *ver. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all might*. Observe here, 1. That there is not only something to be had, but something to be done in this life, and the chief good we are to inquire after is the good *we should do*, *Eccles. ii. 3.* This is the world of service, that to come is the world to recompence; this is the world of probation and preparation for eternity, we are here upon business, and upon our behaviour. 2. That opportunity is to direct and quicken duty; that is to be done which *our hands find to do*, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something to do that will turn to a good account. What must be done of necessity our hand will here find a price in it for the doing of, *Prov. xvii. 16.* 3. That what good we have an opportunity of doing, we must do while we have the opportunity, and *do it with our might*, with care, and vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest days are busy days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with *all that is within us*, and all little enough. 4. There is good reason why we should *work the works of him that sent us while it is day*, *because the night comes wherein no man can work*, *John ix. 4.* We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly, and we know not how soon. But this we know, that if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever. *There is no work to be done, no device to do it, no knowledge for speculation, nor wisdom for practice, in the grave whither thou goest*. We are all going towards the grave, every day brings us a step nearer it; when we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors in life; too late to repent and make our peace with God; too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there, it must be done now or never, *John xii. 33.*

11. ¶ I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. 12. For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

The preacher here for a further proof of the vanity of the world, and to convince us, that *all our works are in the hand of God*, and not in our own hand, shews the uncertainty and contingency of future events, and how often they contradict the prospects we have of them. He had exhorted us, *ver. 12.* to do what we have to do *with all our might*, but here he minds us, that when we have done all we must leave the issue with God, and not be confident of the success.

1. We are often disappointed of the good we had great hopes of, *ver. 11.* Solomon had himself made the observation, and so has many a one since, that events both in public and private affairs do not always agree even with the most rational prospects and probabilities that there were of them. *Nulla fortuna tam delicta est, ut multa tentanti ubique respondeat*, Seneca. The issue of affairs is oftentimes unaccountably cross to every one's expectation, that the highest may not presume, nor the lowest despair, but all may live in an humble dependence upon God, from whom every man's judgment proceeds.

(1.) He gives instances of disappointment, even there where means and instruments were most encouraging and promised fair.

1. One would think that the lightest of foot should in running win the prize, and yet *the race is not always to the swift*, some accident happens to retard them, or they are too secure, and therefore remiss, and let those that are slower get the start of them.

2. One would think that in fighting, the most numerous and puissant army should be always victorious, and in single combat, that the bold and mighty champion should win the laurel, but *the battle is not always to the strong*, an host of Philistines was once put to flight by Jonathan and his man; *one of you shall chase a thousand*; the goodness of the cause has many a time carried the day against the most formidable power.

3. One would think that men of sense should always be men of substance, and that those that know how to live in the world should not only have a plentiful maintenance but get great estates; and yet it doth not always prove so, even *bread is not always to the wise*, much less *riches* always to men of *understanding*; Many ingenious men, and men of business, that were likely to thrive in the world, have strangely gone backward and come to nothing.

4. One would think that those who understand men, and have the art of management, should always get preferment and obtain the smiles of great men; but many ingenious men have been hulked, and have spent their days in obscurity, have fallen into disgrace, and perhaps have ruined themselves by those very methods by which they hoped to have raised themselves; for *favour is not always to men of skill*, but fools are favoured, and wise men frowned upon.

(2.) He resolves all these disappointments into an over-ruling power and providence, the disposal of which to us seem casual, and we call them *chance*; but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called *time*, in the language of this book, *chap. iii. 1. Psalm xxxi. 15. Time and chance happens to them all*. A sovereign providence breaks men's measures and blasts their hopes, and teacheth them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the divine will. We

must use means but not trust to them; if we succeed we must give God the praise, *Psal. xlv. 3.* if we be crossed we must acquiesce in his will and take our lot.

2. We are often surprised with evils we were in little fear of, *ver. 12. Man knoweth not his time*, the time of his calamity, his fall, his death, which in scripture is called *our day* and *our hour*. (1.) We know not what troubles are before us, which will take us off our business, and take us out of the world, what *time and chance will happen to us*, nor what *one day or a night may bring forth*: it is not for us to know the time, no, not our own time, when or how we shall die: God has in wisdom kept us in the dark that we may be always ready. (2.) Perhaps we may meet with trouble in that very thing wherein we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction and advantage: as the fishes and the birds are drawn into the snare and not by the bait that is laid to allure them, which they greedily catch at, so are the sons of men often *snared in an evil time*, when it falls suddenly upon them, before they are aware. And these things too *come alike to all*. Men often find their bane where they thought their bliss, and catch their death where they thought to have found a prize. Let us therefore never be secure, but always ready for changes, that though they may be sudden they may be no surprise or terror to us.

13. ¶ This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemeth great unto me. 14. There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and beleagued it, and built great bulwarks against it: 15. Now there was found in it a poor wife man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. 16. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised; and his words are not heard. 17. The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. 18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace, and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which human affairs are subject to. He had said, *ver. 11.* that *bread is not always to the wise*, yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage or to discourage wisdom; no, he still sticks to his principle, that *wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness*, *chap. ii. 13.* and we ought to love and embrace it and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it. This wisdom, *i. e.* this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no not so much as thanks for his pains, or the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which Solomon saith *seemed great unto him*, *ver. 13.* A public spirit in a private sphere is wisdom, which those who understand things that differ cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

1. Solomon here gives an instance, which probably was a case in fact in some neighbouring country, of a poor man that with his wisdom did great service in a time of public distress and danger, *ver. 14.* *There was a little city*, no great prize whoever was master of it, there were but *few men within it* to defend it; and men, if men of fortitude, are the best fortifications of a city; here were *few men*, and because few, feeble and fearful, and ready to give up their city as not tenable. Against this little city a great king came with a numerous army and besieged it, either in pride or covetousness, to possess it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it; thinking it stronger than it was, he *built great bulwarks against it*, from which to batter it, and doubted not in a little time to make himself master of it. What a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours! This great king needed not fear this little city: what need he frighten it then? It would be little profit to him, why then should he put himself to such a great expence to gain it? But as unreasonably and insatiably greedy as little people sometimes are to *lay house to house, and field to field*, great kings often are to lay city to city, and province to province, that they may be placed alone in the earth, *Isa. v. 8.* Now was the victory and success to the strong? No, there was found in this little city, among the few men that were in it, *one poor wife man*; a wife man and yet poor, and not preferred to any place of profit or power in the city; places of trust were not given to men according to their merit and meetness for them, else such a wife man as this had not been a poor man. Now,

1. Being wise he served the city though he was poor; in their distress they found him out, *Judges xi. 7.* and begged his advice and assistance, and he by his wisdom delivered the city, either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought-of stratagem for their own security, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as the woman at Abel, *2 Sam. xx. 16.* He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had put upon him in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what became of the city; but did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to the public good, and forgotten when the common welfare is concerned.

2. Being poor the city slighted him, though he was wise and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin; *no man remembered that same poor man*; his good services were not taken notice of, no recompence was made him, no marks of honour put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before; *riches were not to this man of understanding*, nor favour to this man of skill. Many that have well merited of their prince and country have been ill paid, such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful rewarder, for among men great services are often envied, and rewarded with evil for good.

3. From this instance he draws some useful inferences; looks upon it and receives instruction.

(1.) Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country: *Wisdom is better than strength*, *ver. 16.* A prudent mind, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength; and may overcome those by out-witting them that are able to overpower him. Nay, *Wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive, *ver. 18.* *Wisdom*, that is religion and piety (for the wise man is here opposed to a sinner) this is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils, and successful in the greatest enterprises. *If God be for us who can be against us*, or stand before us?

(1.) Hence

(2.) Hence he observes the commanding force and power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages, *ver. 17. The words of wise men are heard in quiet*, i. e. what they speak being rational and to the pur- of being spoken calmly, and with deliberation; though not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak loud nor with any great assurance, yet it will be hearkened to and regarded, will gain respect, may, will gain the point, and sway with men more than the imperious clamour of him that *ruleth among fools*: who like fools chose him to be their ruler for his noise and blustering, and like fools think he must by those methods carry the day with every body else. A few close arguments are worth a great many big words; and those will strike sail to fair reasoning; who will answer them that bounce and heftor according to their folly. *How forcible are right words!* What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it.

3. Hence he observes that wife and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or at least endeavoured it, and offered at it when they cannot do the good they would do, nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but alas, if he be poor his wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard, *ver. 16. Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity*, that if he had but fitting encouragement given him might be a great blessing to the world; many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the *righteous shall shine forth*.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wife and virtuous man may do, he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of: *One sinner destroyeth much good.* (1.) As to himself, a sinful condition is a wasteful condition: How many of the good gifts both of nature and providence doth one sinner destroy and make waste of! good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the end of giving them frustrated and perverted. He that destroys his own soul destroys much good. (2.) As to others, what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! one sinner that makes it his business to debauch others, may defeat and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wife man that delivered the city had had his due respect and recompence for it but that some one sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project well laid for the public welfare, has been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but through the wickedness of a few it would it not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint doth much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

CHAP. X.

This chapter seems to be like Solomon's proverbs, a collection of wise sayings and observations, rather than a part of his sermon, but the preacher studied to be sententious, and set in order many proverbs to be brought in in his preaching. Yet the general scope of all the observations in this chapter is to recommend wisdom to us, and its precepts and rules, as of great use for the right ordering of our conversation, and to caution us against folly. 1. He recommends wisdom to private persons that are in an inferior station. (1.) It is our wisdom to preserve our reputation in managing our affairs dextrously, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) To be submissive to our superiors if at any time we have offended them, *ver. 4.* (3.) To live quiet and peaceable lives, and not to meddle with those that are factious and seditious, and are endeavouring to disturb the government and the public repose. The folly and danger of which disloyal and turbulent practices he shews, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11.* (4.) To govern our tongues well, *ver. 12-15.* (5.) To be diligent in our business and provide well for our families, *ver. 18-19.* (6.) Not to speak ill of our rulers, no not in secret, *ver. 20.* 2. He recommends wisdom to rulers; let them not think that because their subjects must be quiet under them, therefore they may do what they please, no, but (1.) Let them be careful whom they prefer to places of trust and power, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* (2.) Let them manage themselves discreetly, be generous, and not childish; temperate, and not luxurious, *ver. 16, 17.* And happy the nation when princes and people make conscience of their duty according to these rules.

1. **D**EAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking favour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. 2. A wife man's heart is at his right hand: but a fool's heart at his left. 3. Yea, also when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

In these verses Solomon shews,

1. What great need wise men have to take heed of being guilty of any instance of folly: for a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and is as hurtful to his good name as dead flies are to sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it to send forth a stinking favour. Note, 1. True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing and very valuable. 2. The reputation that is hardly got and by a great deal of wisdom, must be easily lost, and by a little folly; because envy fastens upon eminency, and makes the worst of the mistakes and miscarriages of those that are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly which in another would not be taken notice of, in them is severely censured. Those that make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from all appearance of evil, and approaches towards it, because many eyes are upon them that watch for their halting, their character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

2. What a deal of advantage a wife man has above a fool in the management of business, *ver. 2.* A wife man's heart is at his right hand, so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, and goes through it with dispatch; his counsel and courage are ready to him whenever he has occasion for them; but a fool's heart is at his left hand, it is always to seek when he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left-handed, and is soon at a loss and at his wits end.

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9. How apt fools are at every turn to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves; he that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be never so little from under the check and left to himself, if he but walk by the way, soon shews what he is, his wisdom faileth him, and by some indecent ill carriage or other, he saith to every one that he meets he is a fool, *ver. 3. i. e.* he discovers it as plainly as if he had told them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is not ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners wherever they go.

4. If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place: for yielding pacifieth great offences. 5. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun as an error, which proceedeth from the ruler. 6. Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. 7. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8. He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. 9. Whoso removeth stones, shall be hurt therewith: and he that cleaveth wood, shall be endangered thereby. 10. If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge; then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct. 11. Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babler is no better.

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government; in Solomon's reign the people were very rich and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant, and when the taxes were high, though they had enough to pay them with, it is probable many carried it insolently towards the government and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

1. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal disgust, *ver. 4.* If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, if upon some misinformation given him, or some mismanagement of thine, he is displeased at thee and threatens thee, yet leave not thy place, forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thine allegiance, do not in a passion quit thy post in his service and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favour: No, wait a while, and thou wilt find he is not implacable, but that yielding pacifies great offences. Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wife and good man that is a master or a magistrate that he could easily forgive those upon their submission, whom yet upon their provocation he had been very angry with. It is safer and better to yield to an angry prince, than to contend with him.

2. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants there is an evil often seen under the sun, and it is a king's evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for it is an error which proceedeth from the ruler, *ver. 5.* it is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but folly is set in great dignity, men of shattered brains and broken fortunes are put in places of power and trust, while the rich men of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet sit in low place, and can get no preferment, *ver. 6.* either the ruler knows not how to value them, or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with. It is ill with a people when vicious men are advanced, and men of worth are kept under hatches. This is illustrated, *ver. 7.* I have seen servants upon horses, men not so much of mean extraction and education, if that were all it were the more excusable: Nay, there is many a wife servant, who with good reason hath rule over a son that causeth shame, but of sordid, servile, mercenary dispositions, I have seen these riding in pomp and state as princes while princes, men of noble birth and qualities, sit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to walk as servants upon the earth, poor and despised, and little regarded. Thus God in his providence punisheth a wicked people, but as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error and a great evil, a grievance to the subject and very provoking; but it is an error under the sun, which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more, for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that is set in great dignity. But if the prince be guilty of his error yet let not the subjects leave their place, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient land-marks of the constitution, and threaten the subversion of it.

1. Let neither prince nor people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence, which he shews here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle to our own hurt. Let not princes invade the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes: for, (1.) He that digs a pit for another, it is ten to one but he falls into it himself, and his violent dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is like to be their fate, and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds. (2.) Whoso breaketh an hedge, an old hedge that has long been a land-mark, let him expect that a serpent or adder, such as used to harbour in rotten hedges will bite him; some viper or other will fasten upon his hand, *Acts xxviii.* 3. God by his ordinance, as by a hedge, hath inclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes, their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves. (3.) Whoso removeth stones to pull down wall or building doth but pluck them upon himself, he shall be hurt therewith, and will with that he had let them alone. Those that go about to alter a well modelled, well settled government, under colour of redressing some grievances and correcting some amisses in it, will quickly perceive not only that it is easier to find fault than mend, to demolish that which is good, than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire and pull an old house about their ears. 4. He that cleaveth wood, especially if as it folloys he hath forry tools, *ver. 10.* he shall be endangered thereby, the chips will fly in his face or his own axe-head. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungovernable spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our own damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people carry it to each other with prudence

religious services, when performed with holy joy, are pleasing to God; he loves to have his servants sing at their work, it proclaims him a good master.

(1.) The reasons for it. Live joyfully, for,

1. It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable. *The days of thy life* are the days of *thy vanity*, there is nothing here but trouble and disappointment, thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore *live joyfully* while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow, *sufficient to the day is the evil thereof*. Let a gracious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world.

2. It is all thou canst get from this world, *that is thy portion* in the things of *this life*; in God and another life thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompence for thy labours in religion, but for thy pains *which thou takest* about the things *under the sun*, this is all thou canst expect, and therefore do not deny this to thyself.

3. Let us apply ourselves to the business of life while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it as by them to be fitted for the employments; therefore *eat with joy and a merry heart*, not that thy soul may take its ease, as *Luke xii. 19.* but that thy soul may take the more pains, and the joy of the Lord may be its strength, and oil to its wheels, *ver. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all might*. Observe here, 1. That there is not only something to be had, but something to be done in this life, and the chief good we are to inquire after is the *good we should do*, *Eccles. ii. 3.* This is the world of service, that to come is the world to recompence; this is the world of probation and preparation for eternity, we are here upon business, and upon our behaviour. 2. That opportunity is to direct and quicken duty; that is to be done which *our hands find to do*, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something to do that will turn to a good account. What must be done of necessity our hand will here find a price in it for the doing of, *Prov. xvii. 16.* 3. That what good we have an opportunity of doing, we must do while we have the opportunity, and *do it with our might*, with care, and vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest days are busy days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with *all that is within us*, and all little enough. 4. There is good reason why we should *work the works of him that sent us while it is day*, *because the night comes wherein no man can work*, *John ix. 4.* We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly, and we know not how soon: But this we know, that if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever. *There is no work to be done, no desire to do it, no knowledge for speculation, nor wisdom for practice, in the grave whether thou goest*. We are all going towards the grave, every day brings us a step nearer it; when we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors in life; too late to repent and make our peace with God: too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there, it must be done now or never, *John xii. 33.*

11. ¶ I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. 12. For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

The preacher here for a further proof of the vanity of the world, and to convince us, that *all our works are in the hand of God*, and not in our own hand, shews the uncertainty and contingency of future events, and how often they contradict the prospects we have of them. He had exhorted us, *ver. 12.* to do what we have to do *with all our might*, but here he minds us, that when we have done all we must leave the issue with God, and not be confident of the success.

1. We are often disappointed of the good we had great hopes of, *ver. 11.* Solomon had himself made the observation, and so has many a one since, that events both in public and private affairs do not always agree even with the most rational prospects and probabilities that there were of them. *Nulla fortuna tam delicta est, ut multa tentanti ubique respondeat*, Seneca. The issue of affairs is oftentimes unaccountably cross to every one's expectation, that the highest may not presume, nor the lowest despair, but all may live in an humble dependence upon God, from whom every man's judgment proceeds.

(1.) He gives instances of disappointment, even where means and instruments were most encouraging and promised fair.

1. One would think that the lightest of foot should in running win the prize, and yet *the race is not always to the swift*, some accident happens to retard them, or they are too secure, and therefore remiss, and let those that are slower get the start of them.

2. One would think that in fighting, the most numerous and puissant army should be always victorious, and in single combat, that the bold and mighty champion should win the laurel, but *the battle is not always to the strong*, an host of Philistines was once put to flight by Jonathan and his man; *one of you shall chase a thousand*; the goodness of the cause has many a time carried the day against the most formidable power.

3. One would think that men of sense should always be men of substance, and that those that know how to live in the world should not only have a plentiful maintenance but get great estates; and yet it doth not always prove so, even *bread is not always to the wise*, much less *riches* always to men of *understanding*: Many ingenious men, and men of business, that were likely to thrive in the world, have strangely gone backward and come to nothing.

4. One would think that those who understand men, and have the art of management, should always get preferment and obtain the smiles of great men; but many ingenious men have been hulked, and have spent their days in obscurity, have fallen into disgrace, and perhaps have ruined themselves by those very methods by which they hoped to have raised themselves; for *favour is not always to men of skill*, but fools are favoured, and wise men frowned upon.

(2.) He resolves all these disappointments into an over-ruling power and providence, the disposal of which to us seem casual, and we call them *chance*, but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called *time*, in the language of this book, *chap. iii. 1. Psalm xxxi. 15. Time and chance happens to them all*: A sovereign providence breaks men's measures and blasts their hopes, and teacheth them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the divine will. We

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13. ¶ This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemeth great unto me. 14. There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: 15. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. 16. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised; and his words are not heard. 17. The words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. 18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace, and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which human affairs are subject to. He had said, *ver. 11.* that *bread is not always to the wise*, yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage or to discourage wisdom; no, he still sticks to his principle, that *wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness*, *chap. ii. 13.* and we ought to love and embrace it and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it. This wisdom, *i. e.* this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no not so much as thanks for his pains, or the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which Solomon saith *seemed great unto him*, *ver. 13.* A public spirit in a private sphere is wisdom, which those who understand things that differ cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

1. Solomon here gives an instance, which probably was a case in fact in some neighbouring country, of a *poor man* that with his wisdom did great service in a time of public distress and danger, *ver. 14.* *There was a little city*, no great prize whoever was master of it, there were but *few men within it* to defend it; and men, if men of fortitude, are the best fortifications of a city; here were *few men*, and because few, feeble and fearful, and ready to give up their city as not tenable. Against this little city a *great king* came with a numerous army and besieged it, either in pride or covetousness to possess it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it; thinking it stronger than it was, he *built great bulwarks against it*, from which to batter it, and doubted not in a little time to make himself master of it. What a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours! This *great king* needed not fear this *little city*: what need he frighten it then? It would be little profit to him, why then should he put himself to such a great expence to gain it? But as unreasonably and insatiably greedy as little people sometimes are to *lay house to house, and field to field*, great kings often are to lay city to city, and province to province, *that they may be placed alone in the earth*, *Isa. v. 8.* Now was the victory and success to the *strong*? No, there was found in this little city, among the few men that were in it, *one poor wise man*; a wise man and yet poor, and not preferred to any place of profit or power in the city: places of trust were not given to men according to their merit and meanness for them, else such a wise man as this had not been a poor man. Now,

1. Being wise he served the city though he was poor; in their distress they found him out, *Judges xi. 7.* and begged his advice and assistance, and he by his wisdom delivered the city, either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought-of stratagem for their own security, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as the woman at Abel, *2 Sam. xx. 16.* He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had put upon him in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what became of the city; but did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to the public good, and forgotten when the common welfare is concerned.

2. Being poor the city slighted him, though he was wise and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin; *no man remembered that same poor man*, his good services were not taken notice of, no recompence was made him, no marks of honour put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before; *riches were not to this man of understanding*, nor *favour to this man of skill*. Many that have well merited of their prince and country have been ill paid, such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful rewarder, for among men great services are often envied, and rewarded with evil for good.

2. From this instance he draws some useful inferences; looks upon it and receives instruction.

(1.) Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country: *Wisdom is better than strength*, *ver. 16.* A prudent mind, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength; and may overcome those by out-witting them that are able to overpower him. Nay, *Wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive, *ver. 18.* *Wisdom*, that is religion and piety (for the wise man is here opposed to a sinner) this is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils, and successful in the greatest enterprises. *If God be for us who can be against us*, or stand before us?

(1.) Hence

(2.) Hence he observes the commanding force and power of wisdom, though at labour under external disadvantages, *ver. 17. The words of the wise are heard in quiet*, i. e. what they speak being rational and to the point of being spoken calmly, and with deliberation; though not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak loud nor with any great assurance, yet it will be hearkened to and regarded, will gain respect, may, will gain the point, and sway with men more than the imperious clamour of him that *ruleth among fools*: who like fools chose him to be their ruler for his noise and blustering, and like fools think he must by those methods carry the day with every body else. A few close arguments are worth a great many big words; and those will strike fail to fair reasoning: who will answer them that bounce and bellow according to their folly. *How forcible are right words!* What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it.

3. Hence he observes that wise and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or at least endeavoured it, and offered at it when they cannot do the good they would do, nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but alas, if he be poor his wisdom is despised, and *his words are not heard*, *ver. 16.* Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity, that if he had but sitting encouragement given him might be a great blessing to the world; many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the *righteous shall shine forth*.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wise and virtuous man may do, he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of: *One sinner destroyeth much good.* (1.) As to himself, a sinful condition is a wasteful condition: How many of the good gifts both of nature and providence doth one sinner destroy and make waste of! good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the end of giving them frustrated and perverted. He that destroys his own soul destroys much good. (2.) As to others, what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! one sinner that makes it his business to debauch others, may distract and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wise man that delivered the city had had his due respect and recompence for it but that some one sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project well laid for the public welfare, has been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but through the wickedness of a few it would it not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint doth much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

CHAP. X.

This chapter seems to be like Solomon's proverbs, a collection of wise sayings and observations, rather than a part of his sermon, but the preacher studied to be sententious, and set in order many proverbs to be brought in in his preaching. Yet the general scope of all the observations in this chapter is to recommend wisdom to us, and its precepts and rules, as if great use for the right ordering of our conversation, and to caution us against folly. 1. *He recommends wisdom to private persons that are in an inferior station.* (1.) *It is our wisdom to preserve our reputation in managing our affairs dextrously*, *ver. 1-3.* (2.) *To be submissive to our superiors if at any time we have offended them*, *ver. 4.* (3.) *To live quiet and peaceable lives, and not to meddle with those that are factious and seditious, and are endeavouring to disturb the government and the public repose.* The folly and danger of which disloyal and turbulent practices he shews, *ver. 8, 9, 10, 11.* (4.) *To govern our tongues well*, *ver. 12-15.* (5.) *To be diligent in our business and provide well for our families*, *ver. 18-19.* (6.) *Not to speak ill of our rulers, nor not in secret*, *ver. 20.* 2. *He recommends wisdom to rulers; let them not think that because their subjects must be quiet under them, therefore they may do what they please, no, but* (1.) *Let them be careful whom they prefer to places of trust and power*, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* (2.) *Let them manage themselves discreetly, be generous, and not childish; temperate, and not luxurious*, *ver. 16, 17.* And happy the nation when princes and people make conscience of their duty according to these rules.

1. **D**EAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking favour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.
2. A wise man's heart is at his right hand: but a fool's heart at his left.
3. Yea, also when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

In these verses Solomon shews,

1. What great need wise men have to take heed of being guilty of any instance of folly: for a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and is as hurtful to his good name as dead flies are to sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it to send forth a stinking favour. Note, 1. True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing and very valuable. 2. The reputation that is hardly got and by a great deal of wisdom, must be easily lost, and by a little folly; because envy fastens upon eminency, and makes the worst of the mistakes and miscarriages of those that are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly which in another would not be taken notice of, in them is severely censured. Those that make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from all appearance of evil, and approach towards it, because many eyes are upon them that watch for their halting, their character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

2. What a deal of advantage a wise man has above a fool in the management of business, *ver. 2.* A wise man's heart is at his right hand, so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, and goes through it with dispatch; his counsel and courage are ready to him whenever he has occasion for them; but a fool's heart is at his left hand, it is always to seek when he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left-handed, and is soon at a loss and at his wit's end.

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9. How apt fools are at every turn to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves; he that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be never so little from under the check and left to himself, if he but walk by the way, soon shews what he is, his wisdom faileth him, and by some indecent ill carriage or other, he saith to every one that he meets he is a fool, *ver. 3. i. e.* he discovers it as plainly as if he had told them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is not ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners wherever they go.

4. If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place: for yielding pacifieth great offences. 5. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun as an error, which proceedeth from the ruler. 6. Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. 7. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8. He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. 9. Whoso removeth stones, shall be hurt therewith: and he that cleaveth wood, shall be endangered thereby. 10. If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge; then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct. 11. Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babler is no better.

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government; in Solomon's reign the people were very rich and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant, and when the taxes were high, though they had enough to pay them with, it is probable many carried it insolently towards the government and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

1. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal disgust, *ver. 4.* If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, if upon some misinformation given him, or some mismanagement of thine, he is displeased at thee and threatens thee, yet leave not thy place, forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thine allegiance, do not in a passion quit thy post in his service and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favour: No, wait a while, and thou wilt find he is not implacable, but that yielding pacifies great offences. Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man that is a master or a magistrate that he could easily forgive those upon their submission, whom yet upon their provocation he had been very angry with. It is fairer and better to yield to an angry prince, than to contend with him.

2. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants there is an evil often seen under the sun, and it is a king's evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for it is an error which proceedeth from the ruler, *ver. 5.* It is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but folly is set in great dignity, men of shattered brains and broken fortunes are put in places of power and trust, while the rich men of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet sit in low place, and can get no preferment, *ver. 6.* either the ruler knows not how to value them, or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with. It is ill with a people when vicious men are advanced, and men of worth are kept under hatches. This is illustrated, *ver. 7.* I have seen servants upon horses, men not so much of mean extraction and education, if that were all it were the more excusable: Nay, there is many a wise servant, who with good reason hath rule over a son that causeth shame, but of sordid, servile, mercenary dispositions, I have seen these riding in pomp and state as princes while princes, men of noble birth and qualities, sit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to walk as servants upon the earth, poor and despised, and little regarded. Thus God in his providence punisheth a wicked people, but as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error and a great evil, a grievance to the subject and very provoking; but it is an error under the sun, which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more, for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that is set in great dignity. But if the prince be guilty of his error yet let not the subjects leave their place, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient land-marks of the constitution, and threaten the subversion of it.

3. Let neither prince nor people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence, which he shews here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle with our own hurt. Let not princes invade the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes: for, (1.) *He that digs a pit for another, it is ten to one but he falls into it himself*, and his violent dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is like to be their fate, and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds. (2.) *Whoso breaketh an hedge, an old hedge that has long been a land-mark, let him expect that a serpent or adder, such as used to harbour in rotten hedges will bite him*; some viper or other will fasten upon his hand, *Acts xxviii.* 3. God by his ordinance, as by a hedge, hath inclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes, their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves. (3.) *Whoso removeth stones to pull down wall or building doth but pluck them upon himself, he shall be hurt therewith*, and will with that he had let them alone. Those that go about to alter a well modelled, well settled government, under colour of redressing some grievances and correcting some amiss in it, will quickly perceive not only that it is easier to find fault than mend, to demolish that which is good, than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire and pull an old house about their ears. 4. *He that cleaveth wood, especially if as it folloxs he hath sorry tools*, *ver. 10. he shall be endangered thereby*, the chips will fly in his face or his own axe-head. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungovernable spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our own damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people carry it to each other with prudence and

and mildness and good temper; *Wisdom is profitable to direct* the ruler how to manage a people that are inclined to be turbulent, so as neither on the one hand, by a supine negligence to embolden and encourage them, nor on the other hand by rigour and severity to exasperate and provoke them to any seditious practices. It is likewise profitable to direct the subjects how to carry themselves towards a prince that is inclined to bear hard upon them, so as not to alienate his affections from them, but to win upon him by humble remonstrances (not insolent demands, such as the people made upon Rehoboam) by patient submissions and peaceable expedients. The same rule is to be observed in all relations, for the preserving of the comfort of them; let wisdom direct to gentle methods, and forbear violent ones: Thus one wife and both happy.

1. Wisdom will teach us to what the tool we are to make use of, rather than by leaving it blunt oblige ourselves to put to so much the *more strength*, ver. 10. We might save ourselves a great deal of labour, and prevent a great deal of danger, if we did what before we cut, i. e. consider and premeditate what is fit to be said and done in every difficult case, that we may accommodate ourselves to it, and may do our work smoothly and easily both to others and to ourselves. Wisdom will direct how to sharpen and put an edge upon both ourselves and those we employ, not to *work deceitfully*, Psal. lii. 2. but to work clean and cleverly. The mower loses no time when he is whetting his scythe.

2. Wisdom will teach us to enchant the serpent we are to contend with, rather than think to out-hiss it, ver. 11. *The serpent will bite* if he be not by singing and music charmed and enchanted, against which therefore he *stops his ears*, Psal. lviii. 4, 5. *and a babbler is no better*, to all those that enter the lists with him, who therefore must not think by dint of words to out-talk him, but by prudent management to enchant him. *He that is lord of the tongue*, so the phrase is, i. e. a ruler that has liberty of speech, and may say what he will, it is as dangerous dealing with him as with a serpent uncharmed; but if you use the enchantment of a mild and humble submission, you may be safe and out of danger; herein *wisdom*, the meekness of wisdom, *is profitable to direct*. *By long forbearing is a prince persuaded*, Prov. xxv. 15. Jacob enchanted Esau with a present, and Abigail David. To those that may say any thing, it is wisdom to say nothing that is provoking.

12. The words of a wife man's mouth are gracious: but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. 14. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? 15. The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Solomon having shewed the benefit of wisdom, and of what great advantage it is to us in the conduct of our affairs, here shews the mischief of folly, and how it exposteth men; which perhaps comes in as a reflection upon those rulers who *set folly in great dignity*.

1. Fools talk a great deal to no purpose, and they shew their folly as much by the multitude, impertinence, and mischievousness of their words as by any thing. Whereas *the words of a wife man's mouth are gracious*, are grace, manifest grace in his heart, and minister grace to the hearers, are good and such as become him, and do good to all about him; *the lips of a fool* not only expose him to reproach and make him ridiculous, but *will swallow up himself*, and bring him to ruin, by provoking the government to take cognizance of his seditious talk, and call him to an account for it. Adonijah foolishly *spoke against his own life*, 1 Kings ii. 23. Many a man has been sunk by having *his own tongue full upon him*, Psal. lxxvi. 8. See what a fool's talk is:

(1.) It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness: *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness*, the foolishness bound up in his heart, that is the corrupting spring out of which all these polluted streams flow; the *evil treasure* out of which evil things are brought. As soon as he begins to speak you may perceive his folly, at the very first he talks idly and passionately and like himself.

(2.) It riseth up to fury, and tends to the hurt and injury of others: *The end of his talk*, the end it comes to is madness, he will presently talk himself into an indecent heat, and break out into the wild extravagancies of a distracted man; the end it aims at is mischief; as at first he appeared to have little government of himself, so at last it appears he has a great deal of malice to his neighbours; that root of bitterness bears gall and wormwood. Note, It is not strange if those that begin foolishly end madly; for an ungovernable tongue the more liberty is allowed it the more violent it grows.

(3.) It is all the same over and over, ver. 14. *A fool also is full of words*, a passionate fool especially, that runs on endlessly, and never knows when to take up; he will have the last word though it be but the same with that which was the first: what is wanting in the weight and strength of his words he endeavours in vain to make up in the number of them; and they must be repeated, because otherwise there is nothing in them to make them regarded. Note, Many that are empty of sense are *full of words*, and the least solid are the most noisy. The following words may be taken either, 1. As checking him for his vain-glorious bragging in the multitude of his words, what he will do and what he will have, not considering that which every body knows, that *a man cannot tell what shall be* in his own time while he lives, Prov. xxvii. 1. much less can one tell *what shall be after him*, when he is dead and gone. Would we duly consider our own ignorance and uncertainty about future events, that would cut off a great many of the idle words we foolishly multiply. Or, 2. As mocking him for his tautologies; he is *full of words*, for if he do but speak the more trite and common thing, *a man cannot tell what shall be*, because he loves to hear himself talk he will say it again, *what shall be after him who can tell him?* like Battus in Ovid:

Sub illis

Montibus (inquit) erant sub montibus & erant illis.

whence vain repetitions are called Battologies, Matt. vi. 7.

2. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose, ver. 15. *The labour of the foolish*, to accomplish their designs, *wearieth every one of them*, i. e. (1.) They weary themselves in that labour which is very foolish and absurd. All their labour is for the world; and the body, and the meat that perisheth; and in this labour they spend their strength, and exhaust their spirits, and *weary themselves for very vanity*, Hab. ii. 13. Isa. lv. 2. They choose that service which is perfect drudgery, rather than that which is perfect liberty. (2.) That labour which is necessary, and would be profitable, and might be gone through with ease, yet wearies them, because they go about it awkwardly and foolishly, and so make their business a toil to them; which, if

they applied themselves to it prudently, would be a pleasure to them.—Many complain of the labours of religion, as grievous, which they would have no reason to complain of if the exercises of Christian piety were always under the direction of Christian prudence. The foolish tire themselves in endless pursuits, and never bring any thing to pass, *because they know not how to go to the city*, i. e. because they have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city is, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Men's imprudent management of their business robs them both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city, that it is a high way, in which the *wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err*, Isa. xxxv. 8. yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

16. ¶ Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning. 17. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles: and thy princes eat in due season, for strength and not for drunkenness. 18. ¶ By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through. 19. A feast is made for laughter and winemaketh merry: but money answereth all things. 20. ¶ Curse not the king, no not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Solomon here observes,

1. How much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers; it is well or ill with the people, according as the princes are good or bad.

(1.) The people cannot be happy, when their princes are childish or voluptuous, ver. 16. *Wo unto thee, O land*, even the land of Canaan itself, though otherwise the glory of all lands, when *thy king is a child*; not so much in age (Solomon himself was young, when his kingdom was happy in him) as in understanding; when the prince is weak and foolish, as a child, sickle and fond of changes, fretful and humourfome, easily imposed upon, and hardly brought to business, it is ill with the people: The body staggers if the head be giddy. Perhaps Solomon wrote this with a foresight of his son Rehoboam's ill conduct, 2 Chron. xiii. 7. he was a child all the days of his life, and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it much better with a people when their princes *eat in the morning*, i. e. make a god of their belly, and make themselves slaves to their appetites. If the king himself were a child, yet if the princes and privy-counsellors are wise and faithful, and apply themselves to business, the land may do the better; but if they addict themselves to their pleasure, and prefer the gratifications of the flesh before the dispatch of the public business, which they disfit themselves for by eating and drinking *in a morning*; when judges are epicures, and do not eat to live, but live to eat, what good can a nation expect?

(2.) The people cannot but be happy, when their rulers are generous and active, sober and temperate, are men of business, ver. 17. The land is then *blessed*, 1. When the sovereign is governed by principles of honour; *when the king is the son of nobles*, i. e. acted and animated by a noble spirit, which scorns to do a base thing and unbecoming so high a character; which is solicitous for the public welfare, and prefers that before any private interests. Wisdom, and virtue, and the fear of God, beneficence, and a readiness to do good to all mankind, these ennoble the royal blood. 2. When the subordinate magistrates are more in care to discharge their trusts than to gratify their appetites: *when they eat in due season*, i. e. when they have dispatched their business and got them a stomach: God gives the creatures *their meat in due season*, Psal. cxlv. 15. let not us take ours unreasonably, lest we lose the comfort of seeing God give it us. When they *eat for strength*, that their bodies may be fitted to serve their souls in the service of God and their country, *and not for drunkenness*, to make themselves unfit to do any thing either for God or man; and particularly to *set in judgment*, for they will *err through wine*, Isa. xxviii. 7. *will drink and forget the law*, Prov. xxxi. 5. It is well with a people when their princes are examples of temperance; when those that have most to spend upon themselves, yet know how to deny themselves.

2. Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs, ver. 18. *By much slothfulness and idleness of the hands*, the neglect of business, and the love of ease and pleasure, *the building decays*; *drops through first*, and by degrees drops down: If it be not well kept covered, and care be not taken to repair the breaches as any happen, it will rain in, and the timber will rot, and the house will become unfit to dwell in. It is so with the family and the affairs of it: If men cannot find in their hearts to take pains in their callings, to tend their shops, and look after their own business, they will soon run in debt and go behind-hand, and instead of making what they have more for their children, will make it less. It is so with the public, if the king be a child and will take no care; if the *princes eat in the morning*, and will take no pains, the affairs of the nation suffer loss, and its interests are prejudiced, its honour sullied, its power weakened, its borders encroached upon, the course of justice obstructed, the treasure exhausted, and all its foundations out of course; and all this through the slothfulness and self-seeking of those that should be the *repairers of its breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in*, Isa. lviii. 12.

3. How industrious generally all are, both prince and people, to get money, because that serves for all purposes, ver. 19. He seems to prefer money before mirth: *A feast is made for laughter*: not merely for eating, but chiefly for pleasant conversation and the society of friends; not the laughter of the fool, which is madness, but that of wise men, by which they fit themselves for business and severe studies: Spiritual feasts are made for spiritual laughter, holy joy, and God. *Wine maketh merry, makes glad the life, but money* is the measure of all things, and *answers all things*.—*Pecunia obediunt omnia*. Though *wine maketh merry*, it will not be a house for us, nor a bed, nor clothing, nor provisions and portions for children; *but money*, if men have enough of it, will be all these; The feast cannot be made without money; and though men have wine, they are not so much disposed to be merry, unless they have money for the necessary supports of life. Money, of itself answers nothing, it will neither feed nor clothe; but as it is the instrument of commerce, it answers all the occasions of this present life: what is to be had, may be had for money; but it answers nothing to the soul; it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favour of God, the peace of conscience; the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained with *corruptible things, as silver and gold*. Some refer this to rulers: It is ill with the people, when they give up themselves to luxury and riot, feasting and making merry, not only because their business is neglected, but because money must be had to *answer all these things*; and, in order to that, the people squeezed by heavy taxes,

4. How cautions subjects have need to be, that they harbour not any disloyal purposes in their minds, nor keep up any factious cabals or consultations against the government, because it is ten to one they are discovered and brought to light, *ver. 20*. Though rulers should be guilty of some errors, yet be not upon all occasions arraigning their administration and running them down, but make the best of them. Here, 1. The command teacheth us our duty: *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought*, do not with ill to the government in thy mind; all sin begins there, and therefore the first risings of it must be curbed and suppressed, and particularly that of treason and sedition. *Curse not the rich*, the princes and governors in thy bed-chamber, in a conclave, or club of persons disaffected to the government; associate not with such; *come not into their secret*; join not with them in speaking ill of the government, or plotting ill against it. 2. The reason consults our safety: Though the design be carried on never so closely, *a bird of the air shall carry the voice to the king*, who has more spies about than thou art aware of, and *that which has wings shall tell the matter*, to thy confusion and ruin: God sees what men do, and hears what they say in secret, and when he pleaseth he can bring it to light by strange and unsuspected ways. Wouldst thou then not be hurt by the powers that be, nor be afraid of them? *do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: but if thou do that which is evil be afraid*, Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A pressing exhortation to works of charity and bounty to the poor, as the best cure of the vanity which our worldly riches are subject to, and the only way of making them turn to a substantial good account, *ver. 1—6*. 2. A serious admonition to prepare for death and judgment, and to begin by times, even in the days of our youth, to do so, *ver. 7—10*.

1. **C**AST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. 2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. 3. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. 4. He that observeth the wind shall not sow: and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. 5. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Solomon has often in this book pressed upon rich people to take the comfort of their riches themselves, here he presseth it upon them to do good to others with them, and to abound in liberality to the poor, which will another day abound to their account. Observe,

(1.) How the duty itself is recommended to us, *ver. 1*.

1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters, thy bread-corn upon the low places*, so some understand it, alluding to the husbandman, who goes from bearing precious seed, sowing bread-corn from his family for his seedness, knowing that without that he can have no harvest another year; thus the charitable man takes from his bread-corn for seed-corn, abridgeth himself to supply the poor, that he may *sow beside all waters*, Isa. xxxii. 20. because as he sows he must reap, Gal. vi. 7. We read of the *harvest of the river*, Isa. xxiii. 3. Waters in scripture are put for multitudes, Rev. xvi. 5. and there are multitudes of poor, we do not want objects of charity, and for mourners, the poor are men of sorrows. Thou must give bread, the necessary supports of life, not only give good words, but good things, Isa. lviii. 7. It must be *thy bread*, that which is honestly got; it is no charity, but injury, to give that which is none of our own to give; first *do justly*, and then *love mercy*. *Thy bread*, which thou didst design for thyself, let the poor have a share with thee, as they had with Job, chap. xxxi. 17. Give freely to the poor, though it may seem thrown away and lost, as that which is *cast upon the waters*. Send it a voyage, send it a venture, as merchants that trade by sea, trust it upon the waters, it shall not sink.

2. *Give a portion to seven and also to eight*, i. e. be free and liberal in works of charity. (1.) Give much, if thou hast much to give; not a pittance, but a portion, not a bit or two, but a mess, a meal; give a large dose, not a sneaking one; give good measure, Luke vi. 38. be generous in giving as they were, when on festival days, they sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared, Neh. viii. 10. worthy portions. (2.) Give to many, to seven and also to eight. If thou meet with seven objects of charity, give to them all, and then if thou meet not only with an eighth (give to that) but with eight more, give to them all too: Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast farther to do, but hold on and mend. In hard times, when the number of poor encreaseth, let thy charity be proportionably enlarged. God is rich in mercy to all; to us, though unworthy, he gives liberally and upbraids not with former gifts, and we must be merciful as our heavenly Father is.

(2.) The reasons with which it is pressed upon us. Consider,

1. Our reward for well-doing is very certain. Though thou *cast it upon the waters*, and it seems lost, thou thinkest thou hast given thy good word with it, and art never like to hear of it again, yet *thou shalt find it after many days*, as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest, and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out, well laid up; it brings in full interest in the present gifts of God's providence, and graces and comforts of his Spirit; and the principal is sure, laid up in heaven, for it is *lent to the Lord*. Seneca, a heathen, could say, *Nihil magis possidere me credam, quam bene donata*.—*Hoc habes quodcumque dedi; hæ sunt divitiæ certæ in quacunque fortis humana levitate. Thou shalt find it*, perhaps not quickly, but after many days; the return may be slow, but it is sure, and will be so much more the plentiful. Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make best returns.

2. Our opportunity for well-doing is very uncertain. *Thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth*, which may deprive thee of thine estate, and put thee out of a capacity to do good, and therefore while thou hast wherewithal be liberal with it; improve the present season, as the husbandman in sowing his ground, before the frost comes. We have reason to expect evil upon the earth, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we know not, but that we may be ready for it whatever it is, it is our wis-

dom in the day of prosperity to be in good, to be doing good. Many make use of this as an argument against giving to the poor, because they know not what hard times may come when they may want themselves, whereas we should therefore the rather be charitable, that when evil days come we may have the comfort of having done good while we were able; we would then hope to find mercy both with God and man, and therefore should now shew mercy. If by charity we trust God with what we have, we put it into good hands against bad times.

(3.) How he obviates the objections which might be made against this duty and the excuses of the uncharitable.

(1.) Some will say, what they have is their own, and they have it for their own use, and why then should they cast it thus upon the waters? Why should I take my bread, and my flesh, and give it to I know not who? as Nabal pleaded, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. Look up, man, and consider how soon thou wouldst be starved in a barren ground, if the clouds over thy head should plead thus, that they have their waters for themselves; but thou seest when they are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth, to make it fruitful, till they are wearied and spent with watering it, Job xxxvii. 11. Are the heavens thus bountiful to the poor earth that is so far below them, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother that is *bene of thy bone*?—Or thus: Some will say, though they give but little to the poor, yet they thank God they have as charitable a heart as any, nay, saith Solomon, *If the clouds be full of rain they will empty themselves*; if there be charity in the heart it will shew itself, James ii. 15, 16. He that draws out his soul to the hungry, will reach forth his hand to them as he has his ability.

2. Some will say their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow, they cannot do the good that they see others can, who are in more public stations, and therefore they will sit still and do nothing; nay, saith he, *In the place where the tree falls, or happens to be, there it shall be*, for the benefit of those to whom it belongs, i. e. every man must labour to be a blessing to that place, whatever it is, where the providence of God casts him; wherever we are we may find good work to do if we have but hearts to do it.—Or thus: Some will say, there are many that present themselves as objects of charity that are unworthy, and I do not know whom it is fit to give it to: Trouble not thyself about that, saith Solomon, give as discreetly as thou canst, and then be satisfied that though the person should prove undeserving of thy charity, yet if thou give it with an honest heart thou shalt not lose thy reward; which way soever the charity is directed, North or South, thine shall be the benefit of it. This is commonly applied to death; therefore let us do good, and as good trees bring forth good fruits of righteousness, because death will come and shortly cut us down, and we shall then be determined to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according to what was done in the body: As the tree falls at death so it is likely to lie to all eternity.

3. Some will object the many discouragements they meet with in their charity; they have been reproached for it as proud and pharisaical; they have but little to give, and they shall be despised if they do not give as others do; they know not but their children may come to want it, and they had better lay it up for them! they have taxes to pay, and purchases to make! they know not what use will be made of their charity, nor what construction will be put upon it: these and a hundred such objections he answers in one word, *ver. 4*. *He that observeth the wind shall not sow*, which signifies doing good, and *he that regards the clouds shall not reap*, which signifies getting good; if we stand thus magnifying every little difficulty and making the worst of it, starting objections and fancying hardships and danger where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work, or make any thing of it: If the husbandman should decline or leave off sowing for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blast of wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year's end: The duties of religion are as necessary as sowing and reaping, and will turn as much to our advantage: the discouragements we meet with in these duties are but as *wind and clouds*, which will do us no harm; and which those that put on a little courage and resolution will despise and easily break through. Note, Those that will be deterred and driven off by small and seeming difficulties from great and real duties, will never bring any thing to pass in religion; for there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at least in our imagination, to discourage us. *Winds and clouds* are in God's hands, are designed to try us, and our Christianity obligeth us to endure hardness.

4. Some will say, they do not see in which way what they expend in charity should ever be made up to them, they do not find themselves ever the richer, why should they depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless they saw which way to expect the operation of it? To this he answers, *Thou knowest not the work of God*, nor is it fit thou shouldst; thou mayest be sure he will make good his word of promise, though he doth not tell thee how or which way, and though he work in a way by himself, according to the counsels of his unsearchable wisdom, he will work, and none shall hinder; but then he will work, and none shall direct or prescribe to him; the blessing shall work insensibly, but irresistibly; God's work shall certainly agree with his word, whether we see it or no. Our ignorance of the work of God he shews in two instances. 1. We know not what is the way of the Spirit; of the wind, so some; we know not whence it comes, whither it goes, nor when it will turn, yet the seamen lie ready waiting for it, till it doth chop about in favour of them; so we must do our duty in expectation of the time appointed for the blessing. Or, of the human soul; we know that God made us and gave us these souls, but how they entered into these bodies, are united to them, animate them and operate upon them, we know not; the soul is a mystery to itself, no marvel then that the work of God is so to us. 2. We know not how the bones are fashioned in the womb of her that is with child; we cannot describe the manner either of the formation of the body, or its information with a soul; both we know are the work of God, and we acquiesce in his work, but cannot in either trace the process of the operation; we doubt not of the birth of the child that is conceived, though we know not how it is formed, nor need we doubt of the performance of the promise, though we perceive not how things work towards it: and we may well trust God to provide for us that which is convenient, without our anxious disquieting cares, and therein to recompence us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or forecast of ours that our bodies are curiously wrought in secret, and our souls found the way into them; and so the argument is the same, and urged to the same intent with that of our Saviour, Matt. vi. 25. *The life, the living soul that God has given us, is more than meat; the body that God has made us is more than raiment*, let him therefore that has done the greater for us, be cheerfully depended upon to do the lesser.

5. Some may say they have been charitable, have given a great deal to the poor, and never yet saw any return for it, many days are past, and they have not found it again: To which he answers, *ver. 6*. yet go on, proceed and persevere in well-doing, let slip no opportunity: *In the morning sow thy seed*, upon the objects of charity that offer themselves early, and in the evening do not withhold thy hand under pretence that thou art weary; as thou

thou hast opportunity be doing good some way or other all the day long, as the husbandman follows his seedness from morning till night. *In the morning of youth, lay out thyself to do good; give out of the little thou hast to begin the world with; and in the evening of old age, yield not to the common temptations old people are in to be penurious; even then withhold not thy hand, and think not to excuse thyself from charitable works, by purposing to make a charitable will, but do good to the last, for thou knowest not which work of charity and piety shall prosper, both as to others and as to thyself, this or that, but has reason to hope that both shall be alike good, Gal. vi. 9. Be not weary of well doing, for in due season, in God's time, and that is the best time, you shall reap.* This is applicable to spiritual charity, our pious endeavours for the good of the souls of others, let us continue them, for though we have long laboured in vain we may at length see the success of them. Let ministers on the days of their seedness sow both morning and evening, for who can tell which shall prosper?

7. ¶ Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. 1. But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. 9. ¶ Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. 10. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.

Here is an admonition both to old people and to young people, to think of dying, and get ready for it. Having by many excellent precepts taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now towards the close of his discourse to teach us how to die well, and to put us in mind of our latter end.

(1.) He applies himself to the aged, writes to them as fathers, to awaken them to think of death, ver. 7, 8. Here is,

A rational confession of the sweetness of life, which old people find by experience. Truly the light is sweet; the light of the sun is so; it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it; light was the first thing made in the formation of the great world, as the eye is one of the first in the formation of the body, the little world; it is pleasant to see the light, the heathen were so charmed with the pleasure of it that they worshipped the sun; it is pleasant by it to see other things, the many agreeable prospects this world gives us; the light of life is so; light is put for life, Job iii. 20, 23. It cannot but be denied that life is sweet: It is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because they have this life at the time of their preparation for a better life: It is sweet to all men; nature saith it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils, or a passage to future good: life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves lest we love it too well.

2. A caution to think of death even in the midst of life, and of life when it is most sweet, and we are most apt to forget death. *If a man live many years, yet let him remember the days of darkness are coming.* Here is, (1.) A summer's day supposed to be enjoyed, that life may continue long, even many years, and that by the goodness of God it may be made comfortable, and a man may rejoice in them all: There are those that live many years in this world, escape many dangers, receive many mercies, and therefore are secure, that they shall want no good, and that no evil shall befall them, that the pitcher which has come so often from the well safe and sound shall never come home broken: But who are they that live many years and rejoice in them all? alas! none; we have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. However, some rejoice in their years, their many years, more than others, if these two things meet, a prosperous state and a cheerful spirit, these two indeed may do much towards enabling a man to rejoice in them all, and yet the most prosperous state hath its alloys, and the most cheerful spirits with its damps; joyful sinners have their melancholy qualms, and cheerful saints have their gracious sorrows; so that it is but a supposition, not a case in fact, that a man shall live many years and rejoice in them all. But, (2.) Here is a winter's night proposed to be expected after this summer's day, yet let this hearty old man remember the days of darkness for they shall be many. Note, 1. There are days of darkness coming, the days of our lying in the grave, there the body will lie in the dark, there the eye sees not, the sun shines not: The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life, the grave is a land of darkness, Job x. 21. 2. Those days of darkness will be many, the days of our lying under ground will be more than the days of our living above ground; they are many, but they are not infinite; as many as they are they will be numbered and finished when the heavens be no more, Job xiv. 12. As the longest day will have its night, so the longest night will have its morning. 3. It is for us often to remember those days of darkness, that we may not be lulled up with pride nor lulled asleep in carnal security, nor never transported into indecencies by vain mirth. 4. Notwithstanding the long continuance of life and the many comforts of it, yet we must remember the days of darkness, because those will certainly come however, and they will come with much less terror, if we have thought of them before.

(2.) He applies himself to the young, and writes to them as children, to awaken them to think of death, ver. 9, 10. where we have,

1. An ironical concession to the vanities and pleasures of youth: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth.* Some make this to be the counsel which the atheist and the epicure gives to the young man, the poisonous suggestions against which Solomon in the close of the verse, prescribes a powerful antidote. But it is more emphatical if we take it as it is commonly understood by way of irony, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal, *Cry aloud, for he is a god; or of Micajah to Ahab, Go to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; or of Christ to his disciples, Sleep on now. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, live a merry life, follow thy sports and take thy pleasures, let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, cheer thee with its fancies and foolish hopes, entertain thyself with thy pleasing dreams, aye do, walk in the way of thy youth, do whatever thou hast a mind to do, and stick at nothing that may gratify the sensual appetite; quidquid libet licet; do thou walk in the ways of thy heart, and let thine heart walk after thine eyes, a rambling heart after a roving eye; what is pleasing to thine own eyes do it, whether it be pleasing in the eyes of God or no; Solomon speaks thus ironically to the young man. 1. To intimate that this is that which he would do, and which he would fain have leave to do, in which he placeth his happiness, and on which he sets his heart. 2. That he willeth all about him would give him this counsel, would prophesy to him such smooth*

things as these, and cannot brook any advice to the contrary, but reckons these his enemies that bid him be sober and serious. 3. To expose his folly, and the great absurdity of a voluptuous vicious course of life: the very description of it, if men would see things intirely and judge of them impartially, is enough to shew how contrary to reason those act that live such a life: the very opening of the cause is enough to determine it without any argument. 4. To shew, that if men give themselves up to such a course of life as this, it is just with God to give them up to it, to abandon them to their own hearts lusts, that they may walk in their own counsels, Hof. iv. 17.

2. A powerful check given to these vanities and pleasures; but know thou, that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment, and duly consider that, and then live such a luxurious life if thou canst, if thou dar'st: This is a collocation or corrective to the foregoing concession, and plucks in the reins he had laid in the neck of the young man's lust: Know then, for a certainty, that if thou dost take such a liberty as this, it will be thy everlasting ruin, thou hast to do with a God who will not let it go unpunished. Note, 1. There is a judgment to come. 2. We must every one of us be brought into judgment, however we may now put far from us that evil day. 3. We shall be reckoned with for all our carnal mirth and sensual pleasures in that day. 4. It is good for all, but especially for young people, to know and consider this, that they may not, by the indulgence of their youthful lusts treasure up unto themselves wrath against that day of wrath, the wrath of the Lamb.

3. A word of caution and exhortation inferred from all this, ver. 10. let young people look to themselves, and manage well both their souls and their bodies, their heart and their flesh. 1. Let them take care that their minds are not lifted up with pride, or disturbed with anger or any sinful passion. Remove sorrow or anger, from thy heart; the word signifies any disorder or perturbation of the mind. Young people are apt to be impatient of check and controul, to vex and fret at any thing that is humbling and mortifying to them, and their proud hearts rise against every thing that crosseth and contradicth them; they are so set upon that which is pleasing to sense, and they cannot bear any thing that is displeasing, but it goes with sorrow to their heart; their pride often disquiets them and makes them uneasy; put that away, and the love of the world, and lay thine expectations low from the creature, and then disappointments will not be occasions of sorrow and anger to thee. Some by sorrow here understand that carnal mirth described, ver. 9. the end of which will be bitterness and sorrow. Let them keep at a distance from every thing which will be sorrow in the reflection. 2. Let them take care that their bodies be not defiled by intemperance, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts. Put away evil from the flesh, and let not the members of thy body be the instruments of unrighteousness. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment; and that which thou art fond of as good for the flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil and hurtful to it, and therefore put it far from thee, the farther the better.

The preacher to enforce his admonition both to old and young, urgeth, as an effectual argument, that which is the great argument of his discourse, the vanity of all present things, their uncertainty and insufficiency.

1. He minds old people of this, ver. 8. All that cometh is vanity; yea, though a man live many years, and rejoice in them all. All that is come already, and all that is yet to come, how much soever men promise themselves from the concluding scenes, it is all vanity. What will be will do no more to make men happy, than what has been. All that come into the world are vanity, they are altogether so at their best estate.

2. He minds young people of this, childhood and youth are vanity: The dispositions and actions of childhood and youth have in them a great deal of impertinence and iniquity, sinful vanity, which young people have need to watch against and get cured: The pleasures and advantages of childhood and youth have in them no certainty, satisfaction, or continuance; they are passing away; these flowers will soon wither, and these blossoms fall; let them therefore knit them into good fruit, which will continue and abound to a good account.

CHAP. XII.

The wise and penitent preacher is here closing his sermon, and he closes it, not only like a good orator, but like a good preacher, with that which was likely to make the best impressions, and which he wished might be powerful and lasting upon his hearers. Here is, 1. An exhortation to young people to begin betimes to be religious, and not to put it off to old age, ver. 1-5. and the great change death will make upon us, ver. 6-7. 2. A repetition of the great truth he had undertaken to prove in his discourse, the vanity of the world, ver. 8. 3. A confirmation and recommendation of what he had written in this and his other books, as worthy to be duly weighed and considered, ver. 9-12. 4. The whole matter summed up and concluded with a charge to all to be truly religious, in consideration of the judgment to come, ver. 13-14.

1. REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2. While the sun or the light, or moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened; 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets; 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Here

Here is, 1. A call to young people to think of God and mind their duty to him when they are young. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* This is, (1.) The royal preacher's application of his sermon concerning the vanity of the word and every thing in it. You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from it, but believe those that have tried, it yields no solid satisfaction to a soul; therefore, that you may not be deceived by this vanity, nor too much disturbed by it, *remember your Creator*, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature. (2.) It is the royal physician's antidote against the particular diseases of youth, the love of mirth and the indulgence of sensual pleasures, the vanity which childhood and youth is subject to; to prevent and cure this, *remember thy Creator*. Here is, 1. A great duty pressed upon us, to *remember God as our Creator*; not only remember that God is our Creator, that he *made us and not we ourselves*, and is therefore our rightful Lord and Owner, but we must engage ourselves to him with these considerations which his being our Creator lays us under, and pay him the honour and duty which we owe him as our Creator. *Remember thy Creators*, the word is plural, as it is, *Job xxxv. 8. Where is God my makers?* For God said, *Let us make man*, us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 2. The proper season for this duty, *in the days of thy youth, the days of thy choice*, so some; thy choice days, thy choosing days; begin in the beginning of thy days to remember him from whom thou hadst thy being, and go on according to that good beginning; call him to mind when thou art young, and keep in mind throughout all the days of thy youth and never forget him, Guard thus against the temptations of youth, and thus improve the advantages of it.

3. A reason to enforce this command: *While the evil days come not, and the years of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* Do it quickly.

(1.) Before sickness and death come: do it while thou livest, for it will be too late to do it, when death has removed thee from this state of trial and probation to that of recompence and retribution. The days of sickness and death are *the days of evil*, terrible to nature, *evil days will come*, sooner or later, as yet they *come not*; for God is *long suffering to us*, ward, and gives us *space to repent*; the continuing of life is but the deferring of death; and while life is continued and death deferred, it concerns us to prepare and get the property of death altered, that we may die comfortably.

(2.) Before old age comes, which if death prevent not, will come, and they will be *years of which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them*; when we shall not relish the delights of sense, as Barzillai, *2 Sam. xix. 35.* when we shall be loaded with bodily infirmities, old and blind, or old and lame; when we shall be taken off from our usefulness, and our *strength shall be labour and sorrow*; when we shall either have parted with our relations and all our old friends, or be afflicted in them, and see them weary of us: when we shall feel ourselves die by inches; these *years draw nigh*, when *all that comes will be vanity*: the remaining months all months of vanity, and there will be *no pleasure* but in the reflection of a good life on the earth and the expectation of a better life in heaven.

These two arguments he enlargeth upon in the following verses, only inverting the order, and shews,

(1.) How many are the calamities of old age, and that if we should live to be old our days would be such as we shall *have no pleasure in* which is a good reason why we should return to God and make our peace with him *in the days of our youth*, and not put it off till you come to be old: for it will be no thanks to us to leave the pleasures of sin when they leave us, not to return to God when need forceth us: but the greatest absurdity and ingratitude imaginable is to give the cream and flower of our days to the devil, and reserve the bran, and refuse, and dregs of them for God; this is offering *the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice*; and besides, old age being thus clogged with infirmities, it is the greatest folly imaginable to put off that needful work till then, which requires the best of our strength, when our faculties are in their prime, and especially to make the work more difficult by a longer continuance in sin, and by laying up treasures of guilt in the conscience, to add to the burthens of age and make them much heavier. If the calamities of age will be such as are here represented we shall have need of something to support and comfort us then, and nothing will be more effectual to do that than the testimony of our consciences for us, that we begin betimes to remember our Creator, and have not since laid aside the remembrance of him. How can we expect God should help us when we are old, if we will not serve him when we are young? See *Psal. lxx. 17, 18.*

The decays and infirmities of old age are here elegantly described in figurative expressions, which have some difficulty in them to us now, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain, to shew how uncomfortable generally the days of old age are.

1. Then the sun and the light of it, the moon and the stars, and the light which they borrow from it, will be *darkened*, i. e. they look dim to old people through the decay of their sight; their countenance is clouded, and the beauty and lustre of it is eclipsed; their intellectual powers and faculties, which are as lights in the soul, are weakened; their understanding and memory fails them, and their apprehension is not so quick, nor their fancy so lively, as it has been; light is often put for joy and prosperity: the days of their mirth are over, and they have not the pleasure either of the converse of the day or the repose of the night, for both *the sun and the moon are darkened* to them.

2. Then the clouds return after the rain; as when the weather is disposed to wet, no sooner is one cloud blown over, but another succeeds it, so it is with old people, when they are got pretty well of one pain or ailment they are seized with another, so that their distempers are *like a continual dropping in a very rainy day*: the end of one trouble is in this world but the beginning of another, and deep calls unto deep: old people are often afflicted with distempers of rheum, like soaking rain, after which still more clouds return, feeding the humour, so that it is continually grievous, and therein the body doth as it were melt away.

3. Then the keepers of the house tremble; the head which is the watch-tower shakes, and the arms and hands, which are ready for the preservation of the body shake too, and grow feeble upon every sudden approach and attack of danger; that vigour of the animal spirits, which used to be exerted for self-defence, fails, and cannot do its office; old people are easily dispirited and discouraged.

4. Then the strong men shall bow themselves, the legs and thighs that used to support the body and bear its weight bend and buckle, and cannot serve for travel as they have done, but are soon tired. Old men that have been in their time *strong men*, are become weak and stoop for age, *Zech. viii. 4. God taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man*, *Psal. cxlvii. 10.* for their strength will soon fade, but in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, he has everlasting arms.

5. Then the grinders cease, because they are few; the teeth with which we grind our meat and prepare it for concoction, cease to do their part because they are few; they are rotted and broken, and perhaps have been

drawn because they ached; some old people have lost all their teeth, and others have but few left; and this infirmity is the more considerable, because the meat not being well chewed for want of teeth, is one great reason why it is not well digested, which is as much an influence as any thing upon the other decays of age.

6. Those that look out of the windows are darkened, i. e. the eyes wax dim as Isaac's, *Gen. xxii. 1.* and Ahijah's, *1 Kings xiv. 4.* Moses was a rare instance of one, who at a hundred and twenty years old had good eyesight, but ordinarily the sight decays in old people as soon as any thing, and it is a mercy to them that art helps nature with spectacles. We have need to improve our sight well while we have it, because the light of the eyes may be gone before the light of life.

7. The doors are shut in the street; old people keep within doors, and care not for going abroad to entertainments; the lips, the doors of the mouth are shut in eating, because the teeth are gone, and the sound of the grinding with them is low, so that they have not that command of their meat in their mouths, which they used to have; they cannot digest their meat, and therefore little grist is brought to the mill.

8. Old people rise up at the voice of the bird, they have no sound sleep as young people have, but a little thing disturbs them, even the chirping of a bird; they cannot rest for coughing, and therefore rise up at cock-crowing, as soon as any body is stirring; or they are apt to be jealous and timorous and full of care, which breaks their sleep and makes them rise early; or they are apt to be superstitious and rise up as in a fright, at those voices of birds, as of ravens, or screech-owls, which sooth-sayers call ominous.

9. With them all the daughters of music are brought low, they have neither voice nor ear, can neither sing themselves nor take any pleasure, as Solomon had done in the days of his youth, in *singing men and singing women and musical instruments*, chap. ii. 8. Old people grow thick of hearing and unapt to distinguish sounds and voices.

10. They are afraid of that which is high, afraid to go to the top of any high place; either because for want of breath they cannot reach it, or their heads being giddy, or their legs failing them, they dare not venture to it: or they frighten themselves with fancies, that that which is high will fall upon them; fear is in the way, they can neither ride nor walk with their usual boldness, but are afraid of every thing that lies in their way, lest it throw them down.

11. The almond-tree flourisheth, i. e. the old man's hair is grown white, so that his head looks like an almond-tree in the blossom. The almond-tree blossoms before any other tree, and therefore fitly shews what haste old age makes in seizing upon men; it prevents their expectations and comes faster upon them than they thought of, grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not.

12. The grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails, old men can bear nothing, the lightest thing sits heavy upon them, both on their bodies and on their minds, a little thing sinks and breaks them; perhaps the grasshopper was some food that was looked upon to be very light of digestion; John Baptist's meat was locusts; but even that lies heavy upon an old man's stomach, and therefore *desire fails*, i. e. he has no appetite to his meat, neither shall he regard the desire of woman, as that king, *Dan. xi. 37.* Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of sense are to them tasteless and sapless.

It is probable Solomon wrote this when he was himself old, and could speak feelingly of the infirmity of age, which perhaps grew the faster upon him for the indulgence he had given himself in sensual pleasures. Some old people bear up better than others under the decays of age, but more or less the days of old age are, and will be, *evil days* and of little pleasure. Great care therefore should be taken to pay respect and honour to old people, that they may have something to balance their grievances, and nothing may be done to add to them. And all this put together makes up a good reason why we should *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, that he may remember us with favour when these *evil days come*, and his comforts may delight our souls when the delights of sense are in a manner worn off.

(2.) He shews how great a change death will make with us, which will be either the prevention or the period of the miseries of old age: nothing else will keep them off nor any thing else cure them: therefore *remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*, because death is certainly before thee, perhaps it is very near thee, and it is a serious thing to die, and we are concerned with the utmost care and diligence to prepare for it.

1. Death will fix us in an unchangeable state; man shall then go to his long home, and all these infirmities and decays of age are harbingers of and advances towards that awful remove. At death man goes from this world and all the employments and enjoyments of it; he is gone for good and all as to his present state; he is gone home; for here he was a stranger and pilgrim; both soul and body go to the place whence they came, *ver. 7.* He is gone to his rest, to the place where he is to fix: he is gone to his home, to the house of his world, so some; for this world is not his: he is gone to his long home; for the days of his lying in the grave will be many: he is gone to his house of eternity, not only to his house whence he shall never return to this world, but to the house where he must be for ever. This should make us willing to die, that at death we must go home; and why should we not long to go to our Father's house? and this should quicken us to get ready to die, that we must then go to our long home, to an everlasting habitation.

2. Death will be an occasion of sorrow to our friends that love us. When man goes to his long home, then mourners go about the streets, the real mourners and those, as now with us, distinguished by their habits as they go along the streets; the mourners for ceremony, that were hired weep for the dead, both to express and to excite the real mourning. When we die we not only remove to a melancholy house before us, but we leave a melancholy house behind us: tears are a tribute due to the dead, and this among other circumstances, makes it a serious thing to die: but in vain do we go to the house of mourning, and see the mourners go about the streets, if it do not help to make us serious and pious mourners in the closet.

3. Death will dissolve the frame of nature, and take down the earthly house of his tabernacle, which is elegantly described, *ver. 6.* Then shall the silver cord by which soul and body were wonderfully fastened together, be loosed, that sacred knot untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then shall the golden bowl that held the waters of life for us be broken; then shall the pitcher, with which we used to fetch up water, for the constant support of life and the repair of its decays be broken, even at the fountain, so that it can fetch up no more; and the wheel, and those organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment, shall be broken, and disabled to do their office any more; the body shall become like a watch when the spring is broke, the motion of all the wheels is stopped, and they all stand still; the machine is taken to pieces; the heart beats no more, nor doth the blood circulate. Some apply this to the ornaments, and utensils of life; rich people must at death leave behind them the cloathing and furniture of silver and gold, and poor people have earthen pitchers, and the drawers of water will have their wheel broken.

4. Death will resolve us into our first principles, *ver. 7.* Man is a strange sort of creature, a ray of heaven united to a cloud of earth; at death these are separated, and each goes to the place whence it came.

(1.) The body, that cled of clay *returns to its own earth*, it is made of the earth; Adam's body was so, and we are of the same mould; it is a house of clay, at death it is laid in the earth, and in a little time will be dissolved into earth, not to be distinguished from common earth, according to the sentence, *Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art, and therefore to dust thou shalt return.* Let us not therefore indulge the appetites of the body, nor pamper it, it will be worms' meat shortly, nor let *sin reign in our mortal bodies* because they are mortal, *Rom. vi. 12.*

(2.) The soul, that beam of light, *returns to that God*, who when he made man of the dust of the ground breathed into him the breath of life, to make him a living soul, *Gen. ii. 7.* and formeth the spirit of every man within him. When the fire consumes the wood the flame ascends, when the ashes return to the earth out of which the wood grew: The soul doth not die with the body; it is redeemed from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15.* it can subsist without it, and will in a state of separation from it, as the candle burns, and burns brighter, when it is taken out of the dark lantern: It removes to the world of spirits, to which it is allied: It goes to God as a Judge, to give account of itself, and to be lodged either with the spirits in prison, *1 Pet. iii. 19.* or with the spirits in paradise, *Luke xxiii. 43.* according to what was done in the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an avenger; and comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them through a Mediator, out of whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God.

8. ¶ Vanity of vanities, faith the preacher; all is vanity. 9. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge: yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. 10. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. 11. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. 12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Solomon is here drawing towards a close, and is loth to part till he has gained his point, and prevailed with his hearers, with his reader, to seek for that satisfaction in God only and in their duty to him, which they can never find in the creature.

(1.) He repeats his text, *ver. 8.* All that which he had fully demonstrated the truth of, and so made good his undertaking in this sermon, wherein he had kept close to his text, and both his reasons and his applications were to the purpose. 2. As that which he desired to inculcate both upon others and upon himself; to have it ready, and to make use of it upon all occasions; we see it daily proved, let it therefore be daily improved: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

(2.) He recommends what he had written upon this subject by divine direction and inspiration, to our serious consideration. The words of this book are faithful, and well worthy our acceptance, for,

1. They are the words of one that was a convert, a penitent, that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, and the folly of expecting great things from it. He was *Cohleth*, one gathered in from his wanderings, and gathered home to that God from whom he had revolted. *Vanity of vanities, faith the penitent.* All true penitents are convinced of the vanity of the world, for they find it can do nothing to ease them of the burden of sin which they complain of.

2. They are the words of one that was wise, wiser than any; endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom; famous for it among his neighbours, who all sought unto him to hear his wisdom, and therefore a competent judge of this matter; not only wise as a prince, but wise as a preacher, and preachers have need of wisdom to win souls.

3. He was one that made it his business to do good, and to use wisdom aright. Because he was himself wise, but knew he had not his wisdom for himself no more than he had it from himself, he still taught the people that knowledge which he had found useful to himself, and hoped it might be so to them too. It is the interest of princes to have their people well taught in religion, and no disparagement to them to teach them themselves the good knowledge of the Lord, but their duty to encourage those whose office it is to teach them, and to speak comfortably to them, *2 Chron. xxx. 22.* Let not the people, the common people, be despised, no, not by the wisest and greatest, as either unworthy or incapable of good knowledge; even those that are well taught have need to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

4. He took a great deal of pains and care to do good, designing to teach the people knowledge; he did not put them off with any thing that came next to hand, because they were an inferior people, and he a very wise man, but considering the worth of the souls he preached to, and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he read and heard from others, that having stocked himself well he might bring out of his treasury things new and old. He gave good heed to what he spoke and wrote himself, and was choice and exact in it; all he did was elaborate. (1.) He chose the most profitable way of preaching by proverbs or short sentences, which would be more easily apprehended and remembered than long and laboured periods. (2.) He did not content himself with a few parables of wise sayings and repeated them again and again, but he furnished himself with many proverbs, a great variety of grave discourses, that he might have something to say on every occasion. (3.) He did not only give them such observations as were obvious and trite, but he sought out such as were surprising and uncommon; he digged into the mines of knowledge, and did not only pick up what lay on their surface. (4.) He did not deliver his heads and observations at random as they came to mind, but methodized them and set them in order, that they might appear in more strength and lustre.

5. He put what he had to say in such a dress as he thought would be most pleasing: He sought to find out acceptable words, words of delight, *ver. 10.* he took care that good matter might not be spoiled by an ill style, and by the ungratefulness and incongruity of the expression. Ministers should study not for big words or fine words, but acceptable words, such as are likely to please men for their good edification, *1 Cor. x. 33.* They that would win souls must contrive how to win upon them with words fitly spoken.

6. That which he did write for our instruction is of unquestionable certainty, and what we may rely upon; That which was written was upright and sincere, according to the real sentiments of the penman, even words of

truth, the exact representation of the thing as it is. These are sure not to mislead their way that are guided by these words. What good will acceptable words do us if they be not upright and words of truth? Most are for smooth things that flatter them, rather than right things that direct them, *Ista. xxx. 10.* but to those that understand themselves and their own interest words of truth, will always be acceptable words.

7. That which this and other holy men wrote will be of great use and advantage to us, especially being inculcated upon us by the exposition of it, *ver. 11.* Here, observe, (1.) A double benefit accruing to us by divine truths, if duly applied and improved, they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. They are of use,

1. To excite us to our duty; they are as goads to the ox that draws the plough, putting him forward when he is dull, and quickening him to mend his pace. The truths of God prick men to the heart, *Acts ii. 37.* and put them upon bethinking themselves when they sifle and grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour in their work. While our good affections are so apt as they are to grow flat and cool, we have need of these goads. 2. To engage us to persevere in our duty: they are as nails to those that are wavering and inconstant, to fix them to that which is good; they are as goads to such as are dull and draw back, and as nails to such as are desultory and draw aside; means to establish the heart and confirm good resolutions, that we may not sit loose to our duty, nor ever be taken off from it, but that what good there is in us may be as a nail fastened in a sure place, *Ezra ix. 8.* (2.) A double way of communicating divine truths in order to these benefits. 1. By these scriptures as the standing rule; the words of the wise, i. e. of the prophets who are called wise men, *Matth. xxiii. 34.* These we have in black and white, and may have recourse to them at any time, and make use of them as goads and nails; by them we may teach ourselves, let but them come with pungency and power to the soul, let the impressions of them be deep and durable, and they will make us wise to salvation. 2. By the ministry, to make the words of the wise more profitable to us, it is appointed that they should be impressed and fastened by the masters of assemblies. Solemn assemblies for religious worship are an ancient divine institution, intended for the honour of God and the edification of his church, and are not only serviceable, but necessary to those ends. There must be masters of these assemblies, who are Christ's ministers, and as such are to preside in them, to be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God. Their business is to fasten the words of the wise, and drive them as nails to the head, in order to which the word of God is likewise as a hammer, *Jer. xxxiii. 29.*

8. That which is written and thus recommended to us is of divine original: Though it comes to us through various hands many wise men and many masters of assemblies, yet it is given by one and the same shepherd, the great shepherd of Israel, that leadeth Joseph like a flock, *Psal. lxxx. 1.* God is that one shepherd whose good spirit indited the scriptures, and assists the masters of the assemblies in opening and applying the scriptures. These words of the wise are the true sayings of God, on which we may rest our souls; from that one shepherd all ministers must receive what they deliver, and speak according to the light of the written word.

9. The sacred inspired writings, if we will but make use of them, are sufficient to guide us in the way to true happiness, and we need not in the pursuit of that to toil ourselves with the search of other writings, *ver. 12.* And further, nothing now remains but to tell thee that of making many books there is no end, i. e. 1. Of writing many books: If what I have written serve not to convince thee of the vanity of the world and the necessity of being religious, neither wouldst thou be convinced if I should write never so much. If the end be not attained in the use of those books of scripture which God has blessed us with, neither should we obtain the end if we had twice as many more; nay, if we had so many as that the whole world could not contain them, *John xxi. 6.* and much study of them would but confound us, and would rather be weariness to the flesh than any advantage to the soul; we have as much as God saw fit to give us, saw fit for us, and saw us fit for. Much less can it be expected that those who will not by these be admonished, should be wrought upon by other writings. Let men write never so many books for the conduct of human life, write till they have tired themselves with much study, they cannot give better instructions than those we have from the word of God. Or, 2. Of buying many books, making ourselves masters of them, and masters of what is in them by much study, till the desire of learning would be unsatisfied, it will give a man indeed the best entertainment and the best accomplishment this world can afford him, but if we be not by these admonished of the vanity of the world, and human learning among other things, and its sufficiency to make us happy without true piety, alas, there is no end of it, nor real benefit by it; it will weary the body, but never give the soul any true satisfaction. The great Mr. Selden subscribed to this, when he owned that in all the books he had read, he never found that on which he could rest his soul but in the holy scripture, especially *Tit. ii. 11, 12.* By these therefore let us be admonished.

13. ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

The great enquiry which Solomon prosecutes in this book is, *What is that good which the sons of men should do?* chap. ii. 3. What is the true way to true happiness? the certain means to attain that great end? he had in vain sought it among those things which the most of men are eager in pursuit of, but here at length he has found it, by the help of that discovery which God anciently made to man, *Job xxviii. 28.* that serious godliness is the only way to true happiness. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, the return entered upon the writ of inquiry, the result of this diligent search you shall have all I have been driving at in two words. He doth not say, do you hear it, but let us hear it, for preachers must themselves be hearers of that word which they preach to others; must hear it as from God; those are teachers by the halves who teach others and not themselves, *Rom. ii. 21.* Every word of God is pure and precious; but some are worthy of more special remark, as this here; the Masorites begin it with a capital letter, as that *Deut. vi. 4.* Solomon himself puts a *nota bene* before it, demanding attention in these words, *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.* Observe here,

1. The summary of religion. Setting aside all matters of doubtful dispute, to be religious is to fear God and keep his commandments. (1.) the rule of religion is the fear of God reigning in the heart: a reverence of his majesty, a deference to his authority, and a dread of his wrath: Fear God, i. e. worship God, give him the honour due to his name in all the instances of true devotion; inward and outward. See *Rev. xiv. 7.* (2.) The rule of religion is the law of God revealed in the scriptures. Our fear toward God must be taught by his commandments, *Ista. xxix. 13.* and those we must keep and carefully observe. Wherever the fear of God is uppermost

in the heart, there will be a respect to all his commandments, and care to keep them. In vain do we pretend to fear God, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him.

2. The vast importance of it: *This is the whole duty of man*; it is all his business and all his blessedness: our whole duty is summed up in this, and our whole comfort is bound up in this. It is the concern of every man, and ought to be his chief and continual care; it is the common concern of all men, of their whole time. It is nothing to a man whether he be rich or poor, high or low, but it is the main matter, it is all in all to a man to fear God, and do as he bids him.

3. A powerful inducement to this, *ver. 14.* We shall see of what mighty consequence it is to us that we be religious, if we consider the account we must every one of us shortly give of ourselves to God; thence he argued against a voluptuous and vicious life, *chap. xi. 9.* and here for a religious

life: *God shall bring every one into judgment.* Note, 1. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's eternal state will be finally determined. 2. God himself will be the judge, God-man will, not only because he has a right to judge, but because he is perfectly fit for it: infinitely wise and just. 3. *Every work will then be brought into judgment*, will be enquired into and called over again. It will be a day to bring to remembrance every thing done in the body. 4. The great thing to be then judged of concerning every work, is whether it be good or evil, conformable to the will of God, or a violation of it. 5. Even *secret things*, both good and evil, will be brought to light and brought to account in the judgment of the great day, *Rom. ii. 16.* there is no good work, no ill work hid, but shall then be made manifest. 6. In consideration of the judgment to come, and the strictness of that judgment, it highly concerns us now to be very strict in our walkings with God, that we may give up our account with joy.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the SONG OF SOLOMON.

All Scripture we are sure is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for the support and advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men, and it is never the less so for there being found in it some things dark and hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction. In our belief both of the divine extraction and of the spiritual exposition of this book, we are confirmed by the ancient, constant, and concurring testimony both of the church of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who never made any doubt of the authority of this book, and of the Christian church, which happily succeeds them in that trust and honour. 1. It must be confessed on the one hand, that if he that barely reads this book be asked as the eunuch was *Understandest thou what thou readeest?* he will have more reason than he had to say, *How can I, except some man shall guide me?* The books of Scripture history and prophecy are very like one another, but this *Song of Solomon's* is very unlike the songs of his father David; here is not the name of God in it, it is never quoted in the New Testament, we find not in it any expressions of natural religion or pious devotion, no, nor is it introduced by vision, or any of the marks of immediate revelation: it seems as hard as any part of Scripture to be made a *favour of life unto life*, nay, to those who come to the reading of it with carnal minds and corrupt affections, it is in danger of being made a *favour of death unto death*: it is a flower out of which they extract poison; and therefore the Jewish doctors advised their young people not to read it till they were thirty years old, lest by the abuse of that which is most pure and sacred (*Horrendum dictu!*) the flames of lust should be kindled with fire from heaven, which is intended for the altar only. But, 2. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that with the help of the many faithful guides we have for the understanding of this book, it appears to be a very bright and powerful ray of heavenly light, admirably fitted to excite pious and devout affections in holy souls, to draw out their desires towards God, to increase their delight in him, and improve their acquaintance and communion with him. It is an allegory, the letter of which kills those who rest in that and look no further, but the spirit of which giveth life, *2 Cor. iii. 6.* *John vi. 63.* It is a parable which makes divine things most difficult to those who do not love them, but more plain and pleasant to those that do, *Matt. xiii. 14—16.* experienced Christians here find a counterpart of their experiences, and to them it is intelligible, while they neither understand it nor relish it who have no part or lot in the matter. It is a song, an *Epithalamium*, or nuptial song, wherein by the expressions of love between a bridegroom and his bride, is set forth and illustrated the mutual affections that pass between God and a distinguished remnant of mankind. It is a pastoral, the bride and bridegroom, for the more lively representation of humility and innocence are brought in as a shepherd and a shepherdess. Now, (1.) This song might easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Jewish church, for whose use it was first composed, and was so taken, as appears by the Chaldee paraphrase and the most ancient Jewish expositors. God betrothed the people of Israel to himself, he entered into covenant with them, and it was a marriage covenant. He had given abundant proofs of his love to them, and required of them that they should love him with all their heart and soul. Idolatry was often spoken of as spiritual adultery and doting upon idols, to prevent which this song was penned, representing the complacency God took in Israel, and which Israel ought to take in God, and encouraging them to continue faithful to him, though he might seem sometimes to withdraw and hide himself from them, and to wait for the further manifestation of himself in the promised Messiah. (2.) It may more easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Christian church, because the condescensions and communications of divine love appear more rich and free under the gospel than they did under the law, and the communion between heaven and earth more familiar. God sometimes spoke of himself as the husband of the Jewish church, *Isa. lxiv. 5.* *Hos. ii. 16—19.* and rejoiced in it as his bride, *Isa. lxii. 4, 5.* But more frequently is Christ represented as the bridegroom of his church, *Matt. xxv. 1.* *Rom. vii. 4.* *2 Cor. xi. 2.* *Eph. v. 32.* and the church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, *Rev. xix. 7.* *xxi. 2—9.* Pursuant to this metaphor, Christ and the church in general, Christ and particular believers, are here discoursing with abundance of mutual esteem and endearment. The best key to this book is the *xlvi*th psalm, which we find applied to Christ in the New Testament, and therefore this ought to be so too. It requires some pains to find out what may probably be the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the several parts of this book; as David's songs are many of them level to the capacity of the meanest, and there are shallows in them in which a lamb may wade; so this of Solomon's will exercise the capacities of the most learned, and there are depths in it in which an elephant may swim. But when the meaning is found out, it will be of admirable use to excite pious and devout affections in us; and the same truths which are plainly laid down in other Scriptures, when they are extracted out of this, come to the soul with a more pleasing power. When we apply ourselves to the study of this book, we must not only with Moses and Joshua, *put off our shoe from off our foot*, and even forget that we have bodies, because *the place where we stand is holy ground*; but we must with John *come up hither*, must spread our wings, take a noble flight and soar upwards, till by faith and holy love we enter into the holiest, for this is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the title of the book, *ver. 1.* we have Christ and his church, Christ and a believer, expressing their esteem for each other. (1.) The bride, the church, speaks to the bridegroom, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* to the daughters of Jerusalem, *ver. 5, 6.* and then to the bridegroom, *ver. 7.* (2.) Christ, the bridegroom, speaks in answer to the complaints and request of his spouse, *ver. 8—11.* (3.) The church expresseth the great value she has for Christ, and the delights she takes in communion with him, *ver. 12—14.*

(4.) Christ commends the church's beauty, *ver. 15.* And (5.) The church returns the commendation, *ver. 16, 17.* Where there is a fire of true love to Christ in the heart, this will be of use to blow it up into a flame.

1. THE song of songs, which is Solomon's.

We have here the title of this book, shewing,

1. The nature of it. It is a song, that it might the better answer the intention

attention, which is to stir up the affections and to heat them, which poetry will be very instrumental to do. The subject is pleasing and therefore fit to be treated of in a song; in singing of which we may *make melody with our hearts unto the Lord*. It is evangelical; and gospel times should be time of joy; for gospel grace puts a *new song into our mouths*, Psal. cxviii. 1.

2. The dignity of it. It is the *song of songs*, i. e. a most excellent song; not only above any human composition, or above all the other songs which Solomon penned, but even above any other of the scripture songs, as having more of Christ in it.

3. The penman of it. It is Solomon's: It is not the song of fools, as many of the songs of love are, but the song of the wisest of men; nor can any man give a better proof of his wisdom, than to celebrate the love of God to mankind, and to excite his own and others' love to God. Solomon's songs were a thousand and five, 1 Kings iv. 32. those that were of other subjects are lost, but this of seraphic love remains, and will to the end of time. Solomon, like his father, was addicted to poetry; and which way soever a man's genius lies, he should endeavour to honour God and edify the church with it. One of Solomon's names was Jedidiah, *beloved of the Lord*, 2 Sam. xii. 25. and none so fit to write of the Lord's love as he that had himself so great an interest in it; none of all the apostles wrote so much of love, as he that was himself the beloved disciple, and lay in Christ's bosom. Solomon as a king, had great affairs to mind and manage, which took up much of his thoughts and time; yet he found heart and leisure for this and other religious exercises. Men of business ought to be devout men, and not think their business will excuse them from that which is every man's great business, to keep up communion with God. It is not certain when Solomon penned this sacred song; some think he penned it after he recovered himself by the grace of God, from his backslidings, as a farther proof of his repentance; and as if by doing good to many with this song, he would atone for the hurt he had perhaps done with loose, vain, amorous songs when he *loved many strange wives*, now he turned his wit the right way. It is more probable he penned it in the beginning of his time, while he kept close to God, and kept up his communion with him; and perhaps, he put this song, with his father's psalms, into the hands of the chief musician for the service of the temple, not without a key to it for the right understanding of it. Some think it was penned upon occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, but that is uncertain; the tower of Lebanon, which is mentioned in this book, chap. vii. 4. was not built, as is supposed, till long after that marriage. We may reasonably think, when in the height of his prosperity, he *loved the Lord*, 1 Kings iii. 3. he thus *perceived him with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things*. It may be rendered, *The song of songs which is concerning Solomon*, who, as the son and successor of David, on whom the covenant of royalty was intailed, as the founder of the temple, and one that excelled in wisdom and wealth, was a type of Christ, in whom are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, and yet is a greater than Solomon; is a song concerning him. It is here fitly placed after Ecclesiastes; for when by that book we are thoroughly convinced of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to satisfy us and make a happiness for us, we shall be quickened to seek for happiness in the love of Christ, and that true transcendent pleasure, which is to be found only in communion with God through him. The voice in the wilderness, that was to prepare Christ's way, cried, *All flesh is grass*.

2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. 3. Because of the favour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. 4. Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. 5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. 6. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

1. The spouse in this dramatic poem here is first introduced addressing herself to the Bridegroom, and then to the daughters of Jerusalem.

1. To the Bridegroom; not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly, *Let him kiss me*; like Mary Magdalen to the supposed Gardener, John xx. 25. *If thou have born him hence*, meaning Christ, but not naming him; the heart had been before taken up with the thoughts of him, and to this relative those thoughts were the antecedent, that good matter which the heart was inditing, Psal. xlv. 1. And they that are full of Christ themselves, are ready to think others should be so too.

Two things the spouse desires and pleases herself with the thoughts of:

1. The bridegroom's friendship, ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*; i. e. be reconciled to me, and let me know that he is so; let me have the tokens of his favour. Thus the Old Testament church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a schoolmaster, and that dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communication of divine grace in the gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and smitten, as the mother kisseth the child that she has chidden. Let him no longer send to me, but come himself; no longer speak by angels and prophets, but let me have the words of his own mouth, those *gracious words*, Luke iv. 22. which will be to me as the *kisses of his mouth* sure tokens of reconciliation, as Esau's kissing Jacob was. All gospel duty is summed up in our kissing the Son, Psal. ii. 12. so all gospel grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal's kissing him when he returned a penitent. It is a kiss of peace. Kisses are opposed to wounds, Prov. xxvii. 6. so are the kisses of grace, to the wounds of the law. Thus all true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls: they desire no more to make them happy but the assurances of his favour, the lifting up the light of his countenance upon them, Psal. iv. 4, 6, 7. and the knowledge of that love of his which passeth knowledge: this is the one thing they desire, Psal. xxvii. 4. They are ready to welcome the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls by his Spirit, and to return them in the humble professions of love to him and complacency in him above all.—*"The fruit of his lips is peace,"* Isa. lvii. 19. Let him give me ten thousand kisses, whose very fruition makes me desire him the more; and whereas all other pleasures tear and wither by using, those of his Spirit become more delightful. So Bishop Reynolds.

She gives several reasons for this desire,

(1.) Because of the great esteem she had for his love: *Thy love is better*

than wine. Wine makes glad the heart, revives the drooping spirits, and exhilarates them, but gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ, and being loved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love, and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any man ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense, and it was more reviving to them than even the richest cordial was to one ready to faint. Note, 1. Christ's love is in itself, and in account of all the saints, more valuable and desirable than the best entertainments this world can give. 2. Those only may expect the kisses of Christ's mouth and the comfortable tokens of his favour, who prefer his love before all the delights of the children of men; would rather forego those delights than forfeit his favour, and take more pleasure in spiritual joys, than in any bodily refreshments whatsoever. Observe here the change of the person, *let him kiss me*, there she speaks of him as absent, or as if she was afraid to speak to him, but in the next words she seeth him near at hand, and therefore directs her speech to him, *thy love, thy loves* (so the word is) I so earnestly desire because I highly esteem it.

(2.) Because of the diffusive fragrant of his love, and the fruits of it, ver. 3. *Because of the favour of thy good ointment*, i. e. the agreeableness and acceptableness of thy graces and comforts to all that rightly understand both them and themselves, *thy name is as ointment poured forth*, i. e. thou art so, and all that whereby thou hast made thyself known; thy very name is precious to all the saints, it is as ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment, which the room is filled with the odour of; the preaching of his gospel was the *manifesting of the favour of his knowledge in every place*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. The spirit was the *oil of gladness*, wherewith Christ was anointed, Heb. i. 9. and all true believers have that *unction*, 1 John ii. 27. so that he is precious to them and they to him, and one to another. A good name is as precious ointment, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, *makes the face to shine*, but the Redeemer outshines in beauty all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up as it had been long (*ask not after my name for it is secret*) but like ointment poured forth; which notes both the freeness and fulness of the communications of his grace by the gospel.

(3.) Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to him. *Therefore do the virgins love thee*. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts that draws them out in love to him; all that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and are true to the vows by which they have devoted themselves to God, that not only suffer not their affections to be violated, but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh; those are the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him *whithersoever he goes*, Rev. xiv. 3. And because Christ is the darling of all the pure in heart, let him be our's, and let our desire be towards him, and towards the kisses of his mouth.

2. The Bridegroom's fellowship, ver. 4. Observe here,

(1.) Her petition for divine grace. *Draw me*. This implies sense of distance from him, desire of union with him; draw me to thyself, draw me nearer, draw me home to thee. She had prayed that he would draw nigh to her, ver. 2. in order to that she prays, that he would draw her nigh to him. *Draw me*, not only with the moral suasion which there is in the fragrant of the good ointments, not only with the attractives of that name, which is as ointment poured forth, but with supernatural grace, with the cords of a man and the bands of love, Hos. xi. 4. Christ has told us, that none come to him but such as the father draws, John vi. 44. We are not only weak and cannot come of ourselves any further than we are helped, but we are naturally backward and averse to come, and therefore must pray for those influences and operations of the Spirit, by the power of which we are of unwilling made willing, Psal. cx. 3. *Draw me*, else I move not: overpower the world and the flesh that would draw me from thee. We are not driven to Christ, but drawn in such a way as is agreeable to rational creatures.

(2.) Her promise to improve that grace: *Draw me, and then we will run after thee*. See how the doctrine of special and effectual grace consists with our duty, and is a powerful engagement and encouragement to it, and yet reserves all the glory of all the good that is in us to God only. Observe, 1. The flowing forth of the soul after Christ, and its ready compliance with him, is the effect of his grace; we could not run after him if he did not draw us, 2 Cor. iii. 4. Phil. iv. 13. 2. The grace which God gives us we must diligently improve: when Christ by his Spirit draws us, we must with our spirits run after him. As God saith, *I will and you shall*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. so we must say, *Thou shalt and we will*; thou shalt work in us both to will and to do, and therefore we will work out our own salvation, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Not only we will walk, but we will run after thee, which notes eagerness of desire, readiness of affection, vigour of pursuit, and swiftness of motion. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart, then I will run the way of thy commandments*, Psal. cxix. 32. when thy right hand upholdeth me, then my soul follows hard after thee, Psal. lxxiii. 8. when with loving-kindness to us he draws us, Jer. xxxi. 3. we, with loving-kindness to him, must run after him, Isa. xl. 31. Observe the difference between the petition and the promise; draw me, and then we will run. When Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church in general, which is his bride, all the members of it do from thence receive enlivening, quickening influences, and are made to run to him with the more cheerfulness, Isa. lv. 5. Or, draw me (saith the believing soul) and then I will not only follow thee myself as fast as I can, but will bring all mine along with me, we will run after thee, I and the virgins that love thee, ver. 3. I and all that I have any interest in, or influence upon, I and my house, Josh. xxiv. 15. I and the transgressors, whom I will teach thy ways, Psal. li. 13. Those that put themselves forth, in compliance with the divine grace, their zeal will provoke many. 2 Cor. ix. 2. Those that are lively, will be active; when Philip was drawn to Christ, he drew Nathaniel; and they will be exemplary, and so will win those that would not be won by the word.

(3.) The immediate answer that was given to this prayer: *The King hath drawn me, hath brought me into his chambers*. It is not so much an answer fetched by faith from the word of Christ's grace, as an answer fetched by experience from the workings of his grace. If we observe as we ought the returns of prayer, we may find that sometimes while we are yet speaking Christ hears, Isa. lvi. 24. The Bridegroom is a King, so much the more wonderful is his condescension in the invitations and the entertainments that he gives us, and so much the greater reason have we to accept of them and to run after him. God is the King that hath made the marriage supper for his Son, Matth. xxii. 2. and brings in even the poor and the maimed, and even the most shy and bashful are compelled to come in. They that are drawn to Christ are brought not only into his courts, into his palaces, Psal. xv. but into his presence-chamber, where his secret is with them, Psal. xxv. 14. where he is free with them, John xiv. 21. and where they are safe in his pavilion, Psal. xxvii. 5. Isa. xxvi. 20. Those that wait at wisdom's gates shall be made to come, so the word is, into her chambers they shall be let into truth and comfort.

(4.) The wonderful complacency which the spouse takes in the honour which the King put upon her. *Being brought into the chamber*, 1. We have what

what we would have; our desires are crowned with unspeakable delights; all our griefs vanish, and we will be glad and rejoice; If a day in the courts, much more a thousand in the chambers, is better than a thousand, than ten thousand elsewhere. They that are through grace brought into covenant and communion with God, have reason to go on their way rejoicing, as the eunuch, Acts viii. 39. and that joy will enlarge our heart, and be our strength, Neh. viii. 9. 2. All our joy shall center in God. We will rejoice, not in the ointments or the chambers, but in thee. It is God only that is our exceeding joy, Psalm xliii. 4. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for. *Gaudium in Domino* was the ancient salutation, and *salus in Domino sempiterna*. 3. We will retain the relish and favour of this kindness of thine and never forget it; we will remember thy love more than wine; not only thy love itself, ver. 2. but the very remembrance of it shall be more grateful to us than the strongest cordial to the spirits, or the most palatable liquor to the taste. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, and it shall make more durable impressions upon us than any thing in this world.

(5.) The communion which a gracious soul hath with all the saints in this communion with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought, we not only meet with him, but meet with one another, 1 John i. 7. for the upright love thee; the congregation, the generation of the upright love thee; whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed and faithful to God will love Jesus Christ: Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among Christians in other things, this they are all agreed in, Jesus Christ is precious to them: The upright here are the same with the virgins, ver. 3. All that remember his love more than wine, will love him with a superlative love; Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24.

2. The spouse applies herself to the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. The church in general being in distress speaks to particular churches to guard them against the danger they were in, of being offended at the church's sufferings, 1 Thess. iii. 3. Or the believer speaks to those that were professors at large in the church, but not of it; or to weak Christians, babes in Christ, that labour under much ignorance, infirmity and mistake, not perfectly instructed, and yet willing to be taught in the things of God. She observed these bystanders look disdainfully upon her, because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings, upon the account of which they thought she had little reason to expect the kisses she wished for, ver. 2. or to expect that they should join with her in her joys, ver. 4. She therefore endeavours to remove this offence; she owns she is black; guilt blackens; the heresies, scandals and offences that happen to the church make her black; and the best saints have their failings; sorrow blackens, that seems to be especially meant; the church is often in a low condition, mean and poor, and appearing despicable; her beauty sullied and her face foul with weeping; she is in mourning weeds, clothed with sackcloth, as the Nazarites that were become blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 8.

Now to take off this offence.

1. She asserts her own comeliness notwithstanding, ver. 5. I am black, but comely; black as the tents of Kedar in which the shepherds lived, which were very coarse and never whitened, weather-beaten and discoloured by long use; but comely as the curtains of Solomon, the furniture of whose rooms, no doubt, was sumptuous and rich, in proportion to the stateliness of his houses. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy and consolation, and nevertheless amiable in the eyes of Christ. Black in the account of men, but comely in God's esteem. Black in some that are a scandal to her, but comely in others that are sincere and are an honour to her. True believers are black in themselves, but comely in Christ, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. Black outwardly, for the world knows them not, but all glorious within, Psalm xlv. 13. St. Paul was weak and yet strong, 2 Cor. xii. 10. and so the church, black and yet comely; a believer, a sinner, and yet a saint: his own righteousness is as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the people of Israel's blackness when they made the golden calf, and their comeliness, when they repented of it.

2. She gives an account how she came to be so black; The blackness was not natural but contracted, and was owing to the hard usage that had been given her. Look not upon me so scornfully, because I am black. We must take heed with what eye we look upon the church, especially when she is in black. Thou shouldest not have looked upon the day of thy brother, the day of his affliction, Obad. 12. Be not offended; for,

(1.) I am black, by reason of my sufferings: The sun hath looked upon me. She was fair and comely, whiteness was her proper colour, but she got this blackness by the burden and heat of the day, which she was forced to bear. She was sun-burnt, scorched with tribulation and persecution, Matt. xiii. 6, 21. and the greatest beauties, if exposed to the weather, are soonest tanned. Observe how she mitigates her troubles; she doth not say, as Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 40. in the day the drought consumed me only the sun has looked upon me: for it becomes not God's suffering people to make the worst of their sufferings. But what was the matter? 1. She fell under the displeasure of those of her own house; my mother's children were angry with me; she was in perils by false brethren; her foes were those of her own house, Matt. x. 21. brethren by nature as men; by profession, members of the same sacred corporation; the children of the church, her mother, but not of God her father; they were angry with her: The Samaritans that claimed kindred to the Jews were vexed at any thing that tended to the prosperity of Jerusalem, Neh. ii. 10. Note, It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children. It was thou, a man, mine equal, Psalm lv. 12, 13. This makes the trouble, the more irksome and grievous; from such it is taken unkindly, and the anger of such is implacable; a brother offended is hard to be won. 2. They dealt very hardly with her; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, i. e. (1.) They induced me to sin, drew me into false worship, to serve their gods, which was like dressing their vineyards, keeping the vine of Sodom; and they would not let me keep my own vineyard, serve my own God, and observe those pure worship which he gave me in charge, and which I do and ever will own for mine. These are the grievances which good people complain most of in a time of persecution, that their consciences are forced, and those that rule them with rigour say to their souls, Bow down that we may go over, Isa. li. 23. Or, (2.) They brought me into trouble, imposed that upon me which was toilsome, and burdensome, and very disgraceful; keeping the vineyards was base and servile work, and very laborious, Isa. lxi. 5. her mother's children made her the drudge of the family: Cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage,

(2.) My sufferings are such as I have deserved; for my own vineyard have I not kept: How unrighteous soever my brethren are in persecuting me, God is righteous in permitting them to do so; I am justly made a slavish-keeper of men's vineyards, because I have been a careless keeper of the vineyard of God hath intrusted me with. Slothful servants of God are justly made to serve their enemies, that they may know my service, and the service of the

kings of the countries, 2 Chron. xii. Deut. xxviii. 41, 48. Ezek. xx. 24. Think not the worse of the ways of God for my sufferings, for I smart for my own folly. Note, When God's people are oppressed and persecuted it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the procuring cause of their troubles, especially that carelessness in keeping their vineyards, so that it has been like the field of the slothful.

7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? 8. ¶ If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. 9. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. 10. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. 11. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Here is, 1. The humble petition which the spouse presents to her beloved, the shepherds to the shepherd, the church and every believer to Christ, for a more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she had complained both of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to heaven for relief and succour against both, ver. 7. Where observe, (1.) The title she gives to Christ, O thou whom my soul loveth. Note, It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that their souls love Jesus Christ, which intimates both the sincerity and the strength of their love; they love him with all their hearts; and they that do so may come to him boldly, and may humbly plead it with him. (2.) The opinion she has of him as the good Shepherd of the sheep; she doubts not but he feeds his flock and makes them rest at noon: Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast and repose for his sheep; they are not starved, but well fed; not scattered upon the mountains, but fed together; fed in green pastures; and in the hot time of the day led by the still waters, and made to lie down under a cool refreshing shade. Is it with God's people a noon time of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ hath rest for them, he carries them in his arms, Isa. xl. 11. (3.) Her request to him that she might be admitted into his society. Tell me where thou feedest. Those that would be told, that would be taught what they are concerned to know and do, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ and beg of him to teach them, to tell them. Tell me where to find thee, where I may have conversation with thee, where thou feedest and tendest thy flock, that there I may have some of thy company. Observe by the way, we should not in love to our friends and their company tempt them or urge them to neglect their business, but desire such an enjoyment of them as will consist with it, and rather if we can to join with them in their business, and help to forward it. Tell me where thou feedest, and there I will sit with thee, walk with thee feed my flocks with thine, and not hinder thee, nor myself neither, but bring my work with me. Note, They whose souls love Jesus Christ earnestly desire to have communion with him by his word in which he speaks to us, and by prayer in which we speak to him; and to share in the privileges of his flock; and we may learn from the care he takes of his church to provide convenient food and rest for it, how to take care of our own souls, which are our charge. (4.) The plea she useth for the enforcing of this request: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by, or after the flocks of thy companions, that pretend to be so, but are really thy competitors and rivals with thee. Note, Turning aside from Christ after other lovers is that which gracious souls dread and deprecate more than any thing else. Thou wouldest not have me to turn aside, no, nor to be as one that turneth aside, tell me then, O tell me, where I may be near thee, and I will never leave thee. 1. Why should I lie under suspicion and look as if I belonged to some other and not to thee? Why should I be thought by the flocks of our companions to be a deserter from thee and a retainer to some other shepherds? Good Christians will be afraid of giving any occasion to those about them to question their faith in Christ and their love to him: they would not do any thing that looks like unconcernedness about their souls, or uncharitableness towards their brethren, or that favours of indifference and disaffection to holy ordinances; and we should pray to God to direct us into, and keep us in the way of our duty, that we may not so much as seem to come short, Heb. iv. 1. 2. Why should I lie in temptation to turn aside, as I do while I am absent from thee? We would be earnest with God for a settled peace in communion with God through Christ, that we may not be as wags and strays, ready to be picked up by him that next passeth by.

2. The gracious answer which the Bridegroom gives to this request, ver. 8. See how ready God is to answer prayer, especially prayers for instruction; even while she is yet speaking he hears. Observe, 1. How affectionately he speaks to her: O thou fairest among women. Note, Believing souls are fair in the eyes of the Lord Jesus above any other. Christ sees a beauty in holiness, whether we do or no. The spouse had called herself black, but Christ calls her fair: Those that are low in their own eyes, are so much the more amiable in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Blushing at their own deformity (saith Mr. Durham) is a chief part of their beauty. 2. How mildly he checks her for her ignorance in these words, If thou knowest not, intimating that she might have known, if it had not been for her own fault; What! dost thou not know where to find me and my flock; Compare Christ's answer to a like address of Philip's, John xiv. 9. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? But, 3. With what tenderness he acquaints her where she might find him: If men say, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, he is there, believe them not, go not after them, Matt. xxiv. 23, 26. but (1.) Walk in the way of good men, Prov. ii. 20. follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, and go forth by them. It will not serve to sit still, and cry, Lord, shew me the way; but we must bestir ourselves to enquire out the way; and we may find it by looking which way the footsteps of the flock lead, which has been the practice of godly people all along, and let that be your practice, Heb. vi. 12. 1 Cor. xi. 1. (2.) Sit under the conduct of good ministers; Feed thyself and thy kids beside the tents of the under-shepherds: Bring thy charge with thee: (and it is probable the custom was to commit the lambs and kids to the custody of the women) the shepherdesses they shall all be welcome; the shepherds will be no hindrance to thee as they were to Ruel's daughters, Exod. ii. 17. but helpers rather, and therefore abide by their tents. Note, Those that would have acquaintance and communion with Christ, must closely and conscientiously adhere to holy ordinances, must join themselves to his people, and attend to his ministers. Those that have the charge of families must bring them with them to religious assemblies: let their kids, their children, their servants, have the benefit of the shepherd's tents.

3. The high encomiums which the bridegroom gives of his spouse. To be given in marriage, in the Hebrew dialect, is to be praised, Psal. lxxviii. 63.

margin so that his spouse is here; her husband he praiseth this virtuous woman, Prov. xxxi. 28. he praiseth her, as is usual in poems, by similitudes. 1. He calls her his *love*, ver. 9. it is an endearing compellation often used in this book; my friend, my companion, my familiar. 2. He compares her to a set of strong and stately horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Egypt was famous for the best horses; Solomon had his from thence, and Pharaoh no doubt had the choicest the country afforded for his own chariots: The church had complained of her own weakness and the danger she was in of being made a prey of by her enemies: Fear not, saith Christ; *I have made thee like a company of horses*, I have put strength into thee as I have done into the horse, Job. xxxix. 19. so that thou shalt with a gracious boldness mock at fear, and not be affrighted, like the lion, Prov. xxviii. 1. *The Lord has made thee as his goodly horse in the day of battle*, Zech. x. 3. *I have compared thee to my company of horses*, which triumphed over Pharaoh's chariots, the holy angels, horses of fire, Hab. iii. 15. *Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses*; and see Isa. lxiii. 13. We are weak in ourselves, but if Christ make us as horses, strong and bold, we need not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us. 3. He admires the beauty and ornaments of her countenance, ver. 10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels*, the attire of the head, curls of hair, or favourites, so some; or knots of ribbons; *thy neck also with chains*, such as persons of the first rank wear, *chains of gold*. The ordinances of Christ are the ornaments of the church; the graces, and gifts, and comforts of the Spirit, are the adorning of every believing soul, and beautify it; these render it *in the sight of God a great price*. The ornaments of the saints are many, but all orderly disposed in rows and chains, in which there is a mutual connection with and dependence upon each other. The beauty is not from any thing in themselves, from the neck, or from the cheeks, but from the ornaments with which they are set off. *It was comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God*, for we were born not only naked, but polluted, Ezek. xvi. 14.

4. His gracious purpose to add to her ornaments; for where God has given true grace, he will give more grace; *to him that hath shall be given*. Is the church courageous in her resistance of sin, as the horses in Pharaoh's chariot? Is she comely in the exercise of grace, as with rows of jewels, and chains of gold? she shall be yet farther beautified, ver. 11. *We will make thee borders of gold*, inlaid, or enamelled with studs of silver; whatever is wanting, shall be made up, till the church and every true believer comes to be perfect in beauty, see Ezek. xvi. 14. This is here undertaken to be done by the concurring power of the three persons in the Godhead; *We will do it*, like that, Gen. i. 26 *Let us make man*; so let us make him anew, and perfect his beauty: The same that is the author will be the finisher of the good work, and it cannot miscarry.

12. ¶ While the king sitteth at his table, my spike-nard sendeth forth the smell thereof. 13. A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. 14. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. 15. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves' eyes. 16. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. 17. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Here the conference is carried on between Christ and his spouse, and endearments mutually exchanged,

1. Believers take a great complacency in Christ, and his communion with him. *To you that believe, he is precious*, above any thing in this world, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Observe,

(1.) The humble reverence believers have for Christ as their Sovereign, ver. 12. He is a King, in respect both of dignity and dominion; he wears the crown of honour, he bears the sceptre of power, both which are the unspeakable satisfaction of all his people. This king has his royal table spread in the gospel, in which is made for all nations a feast of fat things, Isa. xxv. 6. Wisdom hath furnished her table, Prov. ix. 1. He sits at his table to see his guests, Matt. xxii. 11. to see that nothing be wanting that is fit for them; he sits with them, and they with him, Rev. iii. 20. he hath fellowship with them, and rejoiceth in them; he sits at his table to bid them welcome, and to carve for them, as Christ brake the five loaves, and gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude: He sits there to receive petitions, as Ahasuerus admitted Esther's petition at the banquet of wine. He has promised to be present with his people in his ordinances always. Then believers do him all the honour they can, and study how to express their esteem of him, and gratitude to him, as Mary did when she anointed his head with the ointment of spikenard that was very costly, one pound of it worth three hundred pence, and so fragrant that the house was filled with the pleasing odour of it, John xii. 3. which story seems as if it was designed to refer to this passage, for Christ was then sitting at the table. When good Christians, in any religious duty, especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where the King is pleased as it were to sit with us at his own table, have their graces exercised, their hearts broken by repentance, healed by faith, and inflamed with holy love and desire towards Christ, with joyful expectations of the glory to be revealed, then the spikenard sends forth the smell thereof, Christ is pleased to reckon himself honoured by it, and to accept of it as an instance of respect to him, as it was in the wise men of the East, who paid their homage to the new-born King of the Jews, by presenting to him frankincense and myrrh. The graces of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers are exceedingly precious in themselves, and pleasing to Christ, and his presence in ordinances draws them out into act and exercise. If he withdraw, graces wither and languish, as plants in the absence of the sun; if he approach, the face of the soul is renewed, as of the earth in the spring; and then it is time to bestir ourselves, that we may not lose the gleam, nor lose the gale; for nothing is done acceptably, but what grace doth, Heb. xii. 28.

(2.) The strong affection they have for Christ as their beloved, their well-beloved, ver. 13. Christ is not only beloved by all believing souls, but is their well-beloved, their best beloved, their only beloved; he has that place in their hearts, which no rival can be admitted to, the innermost and uppermost place. Observe, (1.) How Christ is accounted of by all believers; he is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire, something we may be sure, nay, every thing that is pleasant and delightful. The doctrine of his gospel, and the comforts of his Spirit, are very refreshing to them, and they rest in his love; none of all the delights of sense are comparable to the spiritual pleasure they have in meditating on Christ, and enjoying him: There is a complicated sweetness in Christ, and an abundance of it; there is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire; we are not straitened in him in whom there is all fulness. The word translated camphire is copher, the same word that signifies an atonement or propitiation; Christ is a cluster of merit and righteousness to all believers; therefore he is dear to them, because he

is the propitiation for their sins. Observe what a stress the spouse lays upon the application; he is unto me, and again, unto me, all that is sweet, whatever he is to others; he is so to me; he loved me and gave himself for me; is my Lord, and my God.

(2.) How is he accepted; he shall lie all night between my breasts, near my heart; Christ lays the beloved disciples in his bosom, why then should not they lay their beloved Saviour in their bosoms? why should not they embrace him with both arms, and hold him fast, with a resolution never to let him go? Christ must dwell in the heart, Eph. iii. 17. and in order to that, the adulterers must be put from between the breasts, Hos. ii. 2. no pretender must have his place in the soul. He shall be as a bundle of myrrh, or perfumed bag between my breasts, always sweet to me: or his effigies in miniature, his love-tokens shall be hung between my breasts according to the custom of those that are dear to each other: He shall not only be laid there for a while, but shall be there, shall abide there.

2. Jesus Christ has a great complacency in his church, and in every true believer; They are aimable in his eyes, ver. 15. Behold thou art fair, my love; and again, behold thou art fair. He saith this, not to make her proud: humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty; but, 1. To shew that there is a real beauty in holiness; that all that are sanctified are thereby beautified; they are truly fair. That he takes a great delight in that good work which his grace hath wrought on the souls of believers; so that though they have their infirmities, whatever they think of themselves, and the world thinks of them, he thinks them fair. He calls them friends; the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. 3. To comfort weak believers that are discouraged by their own blackness let them be told again and again that they are fair. 4. To engage all that are sanctified to be very thankful for that grace which has made them fair, who by nature were deformed, and changed the Ethiopian's skin. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned that she hath dove's eyes, as chap. iv. 1. Those are fair in Christ's account that have not the piercing eye of the eagle, but the pure and chaste eye of the dove: not like the hawk, who, when he soars upward, still has his eye upon the prey on earth; but an humble modest eye, such an eye as discovers simplicity, and godly sincerity, and a dove-like innocency. Eyes enlightened and guided by the holy Spirit, that blessed Dove; weeping eyes; I did mourn as a dove, Ezek. vii. 16.

3. The church expresseth her value for Christ, and returns esteem for esteem, ver. 16. Behold thou art fair. See how Christ and believers praise one another: Israel saith of God, Who is like thee? Exod. xv. 11. and God saith of Israel, Who is like thee? Deut. xxxiii. 29. Lord, saith the church, Dost thou call me fair? No; if we speak of strength, thou art strong, Job ix. 19. so, if of beauty, thou art fair: I am fair no otherwise than as I have thine image stamped upon me: thou art the great original, I am but a faint and imperfect copy: I am but thine umbra, John i. 16.—iii. 34. Thou art fair in thyself, and (which is more) pleasant to all that are thine. Many are fair enough to look at, and yet the sourness of their temper renders them unpleasant; but thou art fair, yea, pleasant: Christ is pleasant, as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us: Thou art pleasant now, when the King sits at his table. Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant, when they are admitted into a communion with him, when they hear his voice, and see his face, and taste his love: It is good to be here.

Having expressed her esteem of her husband's person, she next (like a loving spouse that is transported with joy for having disposed of herself so well, applauds the accommodations he had for her entertainment; his bed, his house, his rafters or galleries, ver. 16. which may fitly be applied to these holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ, receive the tokens of his love, and return their pious and devout affections to him, increase their acquaintance with him, and improve their advantages by him. Now, 1. These she calls ours; Christ and believers having a joint interest in them: As husband and wife are heirs together, 1 Pet. iii. 7. so believers are joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. They are his institutions, and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet: She doth not call them mine, for a believer will own nothing as his, but what Christ shall have an interest in; not thine for Christ hath said, All that I have is thine, Luke xv. 31. all is ours, if we are Christ's: They that can by faith lay claim to Christ, may lay claim to all that is his. 2. These are the best of the kind. Doth the colour of the bed, and the furniture belonging to it, help to set it off? Our bed is green; a colour which in a pastoral is preferred before any other, because it is the colour of the fields and groves, where the shepherd's business and delight is: It is a refreshing colour, good for the eyes, and it notes fruitfulness; I am like a green olive-tree, Psalm lxxxiii. 8. We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4. The beams of our house are cedar, ver. 17. which probably refers to the temple Solomon had lately built for communion between God and Israel, which was of cedar, a strong sort of wood, sweet, durable, and which will never rot, typifying the firmness and continuance of the church, the gospel temple, the galleries for walking are of fir, or cypress, some sort of wood that was pleasing both to the sight and to the smell, intimating the delight which the saints take in walking with Christ, and conversing with him. Every thing in the covenant of grace (on which foot all their treaties are carried on) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, (1) Christ speaks both concerning himself and concerning his church, ver. 1—2. (1.) The church speaks, 1. Remembering the pleasure and satisfaction she had in communion with Christ, ver. 3—4. 2. Entertaining herself with the present tokens of his favour, and taking care that nothing happen to intercept them, ver. 5—7. 3. Triumphant in his approaches towards her, ver. 8—9. 4. Repeating the gracious calls he had given her to go along with him a walking, invited by the pleasures of the returning spring, ver. 10—13. out of her obscurity, ver. 14. and the charge he had given to the servants to destroy that which would be hurtful to his vineyard, ver. 15. 5. Rejoicing in her interest in him, ver. 16. 6. Longing for his arrival, ver. 17. They whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and hope of heaven, know best what these things mean.

1. I Am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. 2. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

See here, 1. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison; he that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning Star, calls and owns himself the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and to the beauty and sweetness which they find in him; and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and

and shepherdesses, when they appear gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands, and chaplets of flowers. *The rose*, for beauty and fragrantcy, is the chief of flowers; and our Saviour prefers the cloathing of the *lily* before that of *Solomon in all his glory*. Christ is the *rose of Sharon*, where probably the best roses grew, and in most plenty; *the rose of the field*; to some, noting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation; it lies open to all; whoever will, may come and gather the rose buds of privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace; he is not a rose locked up in a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him, and comfort in him. He is a *lily* for whiteness, a *lily of the vallies*, for sweetness, for those we call so are a strong perfume. He is a *lily of the vallies* or low places, in his humiliation, exposed to injury; humble souls see most beauty in him; whatever he is to others, to them that are in the *vallies*, he is a *lily*. He is *the rose, the lily*; there is none but he; whatever excellency is in Christ, it is in him angularly, and in the highest degree.

2. What he is pleased to compare his church to, *ver. 2*. 1. She is as a *lily*, he himself is *the lily*, *ver. 1*. She is *the lily*; the beauty of believers consists in their conformity to Jesus Christ, and resembling him: They are his love, and so they are as *lilies*, for those are made like Christ, in whose hearts *his love is shed abroad*. 2. As a *lily among thorns*; as a *lily* compared with *thorns*: the church of Christ doth as far excel all other societies, as a bed of roses doth a bush of *thorns*; as a *lily* compassed with *thorns*. The wicked, *the daughters* of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as *thorns*, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; nay, they are noxious and hurtful, they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be *burned*. God's people are as *lilies* among them, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured by them: They are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and troubles in the world; They must expect it, for they are planted among *thorns*, *Ezek. ii. 6*. but they are nevertheless dear to him for that; he doth not overlook or undervalue any of his *lilies*, for their being among *thorns*. When they are among *thorns*, they must still be as *lilies*, must maintain their innocence and purity, and though they are among *thorns*, must not be turned into *thorns*; must not render railing for railing, and if they thus preserve their character, they shall be still owned as conformable to Christ, Grace in the soul is a *lily among thorns*, corruptible are *thorns in the flesh*, *2 Cor. xii. 7*. are as *Canaanites* to God's Israel, *Josh. xxiii. 13*. but the *lily* that is now among *thorns*, shall shortly be transported out of this wilderness into that paradise, where there is no pricking briar, or grieving *thorns*, *Ezek. xxviii. 34*.

3. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. 5. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. 6. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. 7. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Here, 1. The spouse commends her beloved, and prefers him before all others. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, which perhaps doth not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, so is my beloved among the sons, so far doth he excel them all, all the sons of God, the angels; that honour was put upon him, which was never designed for them, *Heb. i. 4*. all the sons of men: he is fairer than them all, than the choicest of them, *Psal. xiv. 2*. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all: The world is a barren tree to a soul, Christ is a fruitful one.

2. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him; she sat down by him with great delight, as shepherds sometimes repose themselves; sometimes converse with one another under a tree.

A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus. 1. A refreshing shade; I sat down under his shadow, to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun, to be cooled, and so to take some rest: Christ is to believers as the shadow of a great tree, nay, of a great rock in a weary land, *Isa. xxxii. 2, xxv. 4*. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin, and the terrors of the law, as David, *Psal. xxxii. 4*. when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as *Elijah*, when he sat down under the juniper tree, *1 Kings xix. 4*. they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, comforts, and his undertakings for poor sinners, which revives them, and keeps them from fainting; they that are weary and heavy laden, in Christ may find rest. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it; here will I dwell, for I have desired it; and we shall find it not like *Jonah's gourd*, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it, as *Judges ix. 15*. and take an entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all. 2. Here is pleasing nourishing food; this tree drops its fruits to those that sit down under its shadow, and they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste, whatever they are to others; believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, *1 Pet. ii. 3*. his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood, and communicated by his Spirit; promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too; I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience sweet, assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnest and fore-tastes of it are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste to the pleasures of sin, divine consolations will be sweet to our taste, sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb.

3. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all the benefit and comfort she had in communion with him, *ver. 4*. I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted one, nay, he pressed me to a more intimate communion with him; Come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he used to entertain his special friends; from lower to higher measures and degrees of comfort, from the fruit of the apple-tree to the more generous fruit of the vine. To him that values the divine joys he hath more shall be given. One of the rabbins, by the banqueting-house, understands the tabernacle of the congregation, where the interpretation of the law was given; sure then we may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached: and gospel ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's supper, that banquet of

wine, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communion with God in them. Observe, 1. How she was introduced; he brought me, wrought in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouragements, took me by the hand, guided and led me, and gave me an access with boldness to God, as a Father, *Eph. ii. 18*. We had never come into the banqueting-house, and had never been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way, and opening in us, a new and living fountain. 2. How she was entertained; his banner over me was love: He brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over, but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always carried to triumph with him, and in him, *2 Cor. ii. 14*. The gospel is compared to a banner or ensign, *Isa. xi. 12*. and that which is represented in this banner, written in letters of gold, letters of blood, is love, love; and this is the entertainment in the banqueting-house. Christ is the captain of our salvation, and he lifts all his soldiers under the banner of love; in that they centre, to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it: the love of Christ must constrain them to fight manfully. When a city was taken, the conqueror set up his standard in it; he has conquered me with his love, overcome me with kindness, and that is the banner over me. This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experiences of, and she remembers it with delight: Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

4. She professeth her strong affection and most passionate love to Jesus Christ, *ver. 5*. I am sick of love, overcome, overpowered by it. David explains this, when he saith, *Psal. cxix. 20*. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments, and *ver. 81*. My soul fainteth for thy salvation; languishing with care to make it sure, and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief and distance of delay. O how much better is it with the soul when it is sick of love to Christ, than when it is furnished with the love of this world? She cries out for cordials, O stay me with flagons, or ointments, or flowers, any thing that is reviving, comfort me with apples, with the fruits of that apple tree, Christ, *ver. 3*. with the merit and mediation of Christ and the sense of his love to my soul. Note, They that are sick of love to Christ, shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

5. She experienceth the power of tenderness of divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, *ver. 6*. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help, 1. To sustain the love-sick soul, and to keep it from fainting away; his left hand is under my head to bear it up, nay as a pillow to lay it easy. David experienced God's hand upholding him then when his soul was following hard after God, *Psal. lxxiii. 8*. an' Job in a state of desertion, yet found that God put strength into him. *Job xxiii. 6*. All his saints are in his hand, which tenderly holds their aching heads. 2. To encourage the love sick soul to continue waiting till he returns; for in the mean time his right hand doth embrace me, and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love. Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand, and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

4. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her, she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted, *ver. 7*. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem: Jerusalem the mother of us all, chargeth all her daughters, the church chargeth all her members, the believing soul chargeth all its powers and faculties, the spouse chargeth herself and all about her, not to stir up, or awake her love until he please, now he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, *ver. 6*. She gives them this charge by the roses and the hinds of the field, i. e. by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe; my love is to me dearer than those can be to you, and will be disturbed like them with a very little noise. Note, 1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire the continuance of these blessed views, these blessed visits: Peter would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, *Matt. xvii. 4*. 2. Yet Christ will, when he pleaseth, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free agent, and the Spirit, as the wind blows where and when it listeth, and in his pleasures it becomes us to acquiesce. But, 3. Our care must be, that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw and to hide his face; that we carefully watch over our own hearts, and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort be afraid of sinning it away.

8. ¶ The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 9. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. 12. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: 13. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

The church is here pleading herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her further communion with Christ after she is recovered from her fainting fit.

1. She rejoiceth in his approach, *ver. 8*. (1.) She hears him speak, it is the voice of my beloved, calling to me to tell me he is coming; like one of his own sheep she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger, *John x. 4, 5*. and like a faithful friend of the Bridegroom, she rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice, *John iii. 29*. With what air of triumph and exultation doth she cry out, It is the voice of my beloved, it can be the voice of no other, for none but he can speak to the heart, and make that burn. (2.) She seeth him come, sees the goings of our God, our King, *Psal. lxxviii. 24*. Behold, he comes. This may very well be applied to the prospect which the Old Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh: Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came, the clearer discoveries were made of it: and they that waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith, saw him come, and triumphed in the sight: Behold he comes, for they had heard him say, *Psal. xl. 7*. Lo, I come, to which their faith here affixeth its seal; behold, he comes as he has promised. 1. He comes cheerfully, and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping like a roe, and like a young hart, *ver. 9*. as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it, and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to

to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he *straitened till it was accomplished*? Luke xiii. 30. 2. He comes *fleeing and surmounting* all the difficulties that lay in his way; he comes *leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills*, so some read it, making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through, the curse of the law, the death of the cross must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with; but before the resolutions of his love, these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverers of God's church, Christ will break through it, will get over it. (3.) He comes *speedily, like a roe, or a young hart*; they thought the time long, every day a year, but really he hastened, as now, so then, *surely he comes quickly; he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. When he comes for the deliverance of his people, he *flies upon a cloud*, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find that even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting loving-kindnesses.

2. She pleases herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour: He *stands behind our wall*. I know he is there, for sometimes he *looks forth at the window, or looks in at it, and flourisheth himself through the lattice*. Such was the state of the Old Testament church while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah: the ceremonial law is called a *wall of partition*, Ephes. ii. 14. a *vail*, 2 Cor. iii. 13. but Christ stood behind that wall, they had him near them, they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly; he that was the substance was not far off from the shadows, Col. ii. 17. They saw him looking through the windows of ceremonial institutions, and blossoming through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnestness of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming; we now *see him through a glass darkly*, the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him, but not *face to face*, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is *behind the wall* of external signs, through *those lattices* he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly *see him as he is*. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud: Christ is out of sight and yet not far off. See Job xxxiv. 14. and compare Job xxviii. 8, 9, 10. She calls the wall that interposed between her and her beloved, *our wall*, because it is sin and nothing else that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting, Isa. lx. 1. behind that he stands, as *waiting to be gracious*, and ready to be reconciled upon our repentance. Then he *looks in at the window*, observes the frame of our hearts, and the working of our souls; he looks forth at the window, and shows himself in giving them some comfort, that they may continue hoping for his return.

3. She repeats the gracious invitation he had given her to come a walking with him, ver. 10—13. She remembers what her beloved said to her, for it had made a very pleasing and powerful impression upon her, and the word that quickens us we shall never forget. She relates it for the encouragement of others, telling them what he had said to her soul, and *done for her soul*, Psal. lvi. 16.

(1.) He called her his love and his fair one; whatever she is to others, to him she is acceptable, and in his eyes she is amiable. Those that take Christ for their beloved, he will own them as his; never was any love lost that was bestowed upon Christ. Christ, by expressing his love to believers, invites and encourages them to follow him.

(2.) He called to her to *arise and come away*, ver. 10. And again, ver. 13. the repetition notes backwardness in her; we have need to be often called to come away with Jesus Christ, *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*. But it notes earnestness in him; so much is his heart set upon the welfare of precious souls, that he importunes them most pressingly to that which is for their own good.

(3.) He gave for a reason the return of the spring, and the pleasantness of the weather; which is elegantly described in a great variety of expressions.

1. *The winter is past*, the dark, and cold, and barren winter; long winters and hard ones pass away at last, they do not endure always. And the spring would not be so pleasant as it is, if it did not succeed the winter, which is a foil to its beauty, Eccles. vii. 14. The face neither of the heavens, nor the earth, is always the same, but subject to continual vicissitudes, diurnal and annual. *The winter is past*, but not past away for ever, it will come again, and we must provide for it in summer, Prov. vi. 6—8. We must weep in winter, and rejoice in summer, as though we wept and rejoiced not, for both are passing.

The rain is over and gone, the winter rain, the cold stormy rain, it is over now, and the dew is as the dew of herbs. Even the rain that drowned the world was over and gone at last, Gen. viii. 1, 2, 3. and God promised to drown the world no more which was a type and figure of the covenant of grace, Isaiah liv. 9.

3. *The flowers appear upon the earth*; all winter they are dead and buried in their roots, and there is no sign of them, but in the spring they revive, and shew themselves in a wonderful variety, and verdure, and like the dew that produceth them, *tarry not for man*, Mic. v. 7. They appear, but they will soon disappear again, and man is herein like the flower of the field, Job xiv. 2.

4. *The time of the singing of birds is come*. The little birds that all the winter lie hid in their retirements, and scarce live when the spring returns, forget all the calamities of the winter, and to the best of their capacity chant forth the praises of their Creator. And he that understands the birds that cry for want, Psal. cxlvii. 9. no doubt takes notice of those that sing for joy, Psal. civ. 12. The singing of the birds may shame our silence in God's praises, who are better fed, Matt. vi. 26. and better taught, Job xxxv. 11. and are of more value than many sparrows. They live without inordinate care, Matt. vi. 29. and therefore they sing while we murmur.

5. *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, which is one of the seasons of birds mentioned, Jer. viii. 7. that observe the time of their coming, and the time of their singing, and so shame us who know not the judgments of the Lord, understand not the times, nor do that which is beautiful in its season, do not sing in singing-time.

6. *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs*, by which we may know that summer is nigh, Matt. xxiv. 32. when the green figs will be ripe figs, and fit for use; and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell: the earth produceth not only flowers, ver. 12. but fruits; and the smell of the fruits which are profitable, is to be preferred far before that of the flowers, which are only for shew and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of vines: and who is the old serpent, and who the true vine, we know very well.

Now this description of the returning spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable,

1. To the introducing the gospel in the room of the Old Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter time with the church. Christ's

gospel warms that which was cold, makes that fruitful which before was dead and barren; when it come to any place it puts a beauty and glory upon that place, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8. and ministers occasion for joy. Spring-time is pleasant time, and so is the gospel. *Aspice venturo latentur ut omnia sacro*, said Virgil, from the Sibyls, perhaps with more reference to the setting up the Messiah's kingdom at that time than he himself thought of. See Psal. xvi. 11. *Arise then*, and improve this spring-time; *come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ*, 1 Cor. i. 9.

2. To the delivering of the church from the power of persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to it, after a severe winter of suffering and restraint. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the voice of the turtle, the joyful sound of the gospel of Christ is again heard, and ordinances enjoyed with freedom, then *arise and come away* to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord, sing in the ways of the Lord, when the churches had rest, then they were edified, Acts ix. 31.

3. To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace; that blessed change is like the return of the spring, an universal change, and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation, it is being born again. The soul that was hard and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable, like the earth in winter, becomes fruitful like the earth in spring; and by degrees, like it, brings its fruit to perfection. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the Son of Righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to *arise and come away*; come, gather in summer.

4. To the consolation of the saints after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God under doubts and fears is like the earth in winter, its nights long, its days dark, good affection chilled, nothing done nothing got, the hand sealed up. But comfort will return, the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear; arise therefore, poor drooping soul, and *come away with thy beloved*. *Arise and shake thyself from the dust*, Isa. lii. 2. *Arise shine, for thy light is come*, Isa. lx. 1. *walk in that light*, Isa. ii. 5.

5. To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lay in the grave, as the roots of plants in the ground during the winter, shall then *flourish as an herb*, Isa. lxvi. 14—xxvi. 19. That will be an eternal farewell to winter, and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

14. ¶ O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely. 15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes. 16. ¶ My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies. 17. Until the day break: and the shadows flee away: turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.

Here is, 1. The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to his church and every believing soul to come into communion with him, ver. 14. (1.) His love is now *his dove*; David here called the church of God's *turtle dove*, Psal. lxxiv. 19. and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her wings covered with silver, Psal. lxxviii. 13. for innocence and inoffensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dove-like spirit, gentle and harmless, loving quietness and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended like a dove on Christ, and so he doth on all Christians; making them of a *meek and quiet spirit*. She is *Christ's dove*, for he owns her and delights in her, she can find no rest but in him and his ark, and therefore to him, as her Noah she returns. (2.) This dove is *in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs*. This speaks either, 1. Her praise; Christ is the rock to whom she flies for shelter, and in whom alone she can think herself safe, and find herself easy, as the dove in the hole of the rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, Jer. xlviii. 28. Moses was hid in the cleft of a rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires into the secret places of the stairs, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain *himself alone to pray*. Or, 2. Her blame, she crept into the clefts of the rock, and the secret places for fear and shame; any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her beloved, being conscious to herself of her own unsuitness and unworthiness to come into his presence and speak to him, she drew back, and was like a *filly dove without heart*, Hos. vii. 11. (3.) Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements; Come, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: she was mourning like a dove, Isa. xxxviii. 4. bemoaning herself like the doves of the vallies, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, mourning for her iniquities, Ezek. vii. 16. and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot, being purged from an evil conscience, Job xi. 15—xxii. 26. to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great High Priest, there, Heb. iv. 16. to tell what her petition is, and what her request; let me hear thy voice, hear what thou hast to say, what wouldst thou that I should do unto you? Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or repulse. (4.) For her encouragement he tells her the good thoughts he had of her, whatever she thought of herself; *sweet is thy voice*, thy praying voice, though thou canst but chatter like a crane, or a swallow, Isa. xxxviii. 14. it is music in God's ears; he hath assured us, that the prayer of the upright is his delight; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the spiritual sacrifices are no less acceptable, 1 Pet. ii. 5. This doth not so much commend our services, as God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the much incense which is offered with the prayers of the saints, Rev. viii. 3. That countenance of thine which thou art ashamed of, is comely, though now mournful, much more will it be so when it becomes cheerful. Then the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God, when the countenance, i. e. the conversation in which we shew ourselves before men is holy, and so comely and agreeable to our profession: those that are sanctified have the best comeliness.

2. The charge which Christ gives his servants, to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church, and drives her, like a poor frightened dove into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kingdom in the world, and in the heart, ver. 15. Take us the foxes, (take them for us, for it is a good service both to Christ and the church) the little foxes, that creep in insensibly, for though they are little they do great mischief, they spoil the vines, which they must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when our vines have tender grapes that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are

as vines, weak, but useful plants; their fruits are *as tender grapes*, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge to *take the foxes* is, (1.) A charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetite and passions, which are *as foxes, little foxes*, that destroy their graces and comforts, quasi good motions, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the *little foxes*, the first rising of sin, the little one of Babylon, *Psal. cxxxvii. 9.* those sins that seem little, for they very often prove dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good, we must put it away. (2.) A charge to all their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgments, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety; persecutors are foxes, *Luke xiii. 32.* false prophets are foxes, *Ezek. xiii. 4.* Those that sow the tares of heresy and schism, and like Diotrophes, trouble the peace of the church, and obstruct the progress of the gospel, they are the foxes, the little foxes, which must not be knocked on the head, (*Christ came not to destroy men's lives*) but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

3. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she takes in her interest in him, and communion with him, *ver. 16.* He had called her to *rise and come away* with him, to let him see her face, and hear her voice; now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark; and at a distance, (1.) She comforts herself with the thoughts of the mutual interest and relation that was between her and her beloved: *My beloved to me, and I to him*, so the original reads it very emphatically; the conciseness of the language speaks the largeness or her affections; what is he to me, and I to him, may be better conceived than expressed. Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all true believers that Christ is theirs; *my beloved is mine*, that notes not only propriety, I have a full title to him, but possession and tenure. I receive from his fulness; believers are partakers of Christ, they have not only an interest in him, but the enjoyment of him, are taken not only into covenant, but into communion with him. All the benefits of his glorious undertaking as Mediator are made over to them. He is that to them which the world neither is nor can be, all that which they need and desire, and which will make a complete happiness for them. All he is theirs, and all he has, all he has done, and all he is doing; and all he has promised in the gospel, all he hath prepared in heaven, all is yours. 2. It is the undoubted character of all true believers; that they are Christ's, and then, and then only he is theirs: they have given their own selves to him, *2 Cor. viii. 5.* they receive his doctrine and obey his law, they bear his image, and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, his wholly, his only, his forever, we may take the comfort of his being ours. (2.) She comforts herself with the thoughts of the communications of his grace to his people: *He feedeth among the lilies.* When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in particular, she rejoiceth in the assurance of her presence with all believers in general, who are as lilies in his eye; he feeds among them, *i. e.* he takes as much pleasure in them and their assemblies, as a man doth at his table or in his garden, for he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, he delights to converse with them, and to do them good.

4. The church's hope and expectation of Christ's coming, and her prayer grounded thereupon.

1. She doubts not but that the *day will break*, and the shadows will flee away. The gospel day will dawn, and the shadows of the ceremonial law will flee away; this was the comfort of the Old Testament church, that after the long night of that dark dispensation; the day spring from on high would at length visit them, to give light to them that sit in darkness, when the sun riseth, the shades of the night vanish, so do the shadows of the day when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and all our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the upright shall have a dominion; a day that shall have no night after it.

2. She begs the presence of her beloved in the mean time to support and comfort her; *turn my beloved, turn to me, come and visit me, come and relieve me; be with me always to the end of the age.* In the day of my extremity make haste to help me, make no long tarrying. Come over even the mountains of division, interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love.

3. She begs that he would not only return to her for the present, but hasten his coming to fetch her to himself: *Even so, come, Lord, Jesus, come quickly.* Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, like a roe, or a young hart, leap over them with ease. O show thyself to me, or take me up to thee.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter, 1. The church gives an account of a sore trial where-with she was exercised through the withdrawals of her beloved from her, the pains she was at before she recovered the comfortable sense of his favour again, and the resolution she took when she did recover it, not to lose it again, as she had done through her own carelessness, *ver. 1—5.* The daughters of Jerusalem admire the excellencies of the church, *ver. 6.* 3. The churches admire Jesus Christ under the person of Solomon, his bed, and the life guards about it, *ver. 7, 8.* His chariot, *ver. 9, 10.* And calls upon the daughters of Zion, who were admiring her, to admire him rather, especially as he appeared on his coronation day, and the day of his nuptials, *ver. 11.*

1. **B**Y night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 2. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 3. The watchmen that go about the city, found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? 4. It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

God used not to say to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me in vain*, and yet here we have the spouse for a great while seeking her beloved in vain, but

finds him at last to her unspeakable satisfaction. It was hard to the Old Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law, and the types and figures which then were of good things to come: long was the consolation of Israel looked for before it came, the watchmen of that church gave little assistance to those who enquired after him, but at length Simeon had him in his arms whom his soul loved. It is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while, but at *even time it shall be light*, and they that seek Christ to the end shall find him at length. Observe,

1. How the spouse sought him in vain upon her bed, *ver. 1.* when she was up and looking about her, grace in act and exercise, though her beloved was withdrawn, yet she could not see him at a distance, *chap. ii. 8.* but now it was otherwise. She still continued her affection to him, still it was he whom her soul loved, that bond of the covenant still continued firm, though he lay me, I will trust in him, though he leave me, I will love him. When I have him not in my arms, I have him in my heart. But she wanted the communion she used to have with him; as David, when he thirsted for God, for the living God. She sought him, but (1.) It was by night on her bed, it was late and lazy seeking. Her understanding was clouded, it was by night, in the dark, her affections were chilled, it was on her bed half asleep. The wife virgins slumbered in the absence of the bridegroom. It was a dark time with the believer: she saw not her signs, and yet she sought them. They whose souls love Jesus Christ will continue to seek him, even in silence and solitude: their reins instruct them to do so even in the night season. (2.) She missed of finding him: sometimes he is found of them that seek him not, *Isa. lxxv. 1.* but here he is not found of one that sought him; either for the punishment of her corruptions, her slothfulness and security, (we miss of comfort, because we do not seek it aright) or for the exercise of her graces, her faith and patience, to try whether she will continue seeking; the woman of Canaan sought Christ, and found him not at first, that she might find him at length so much the more to her honour and comfort.

2. How she sought him in vain abroad, *ver. 2.* She had made trial of a secret worship, and had gone through the duties of the closet, had remembered him on her bed, and meditated on him in the night watches, *Psal. lxxiii. 6.* but she did not meet with comfort, *my soul ran in the night*, and then I remembered God, and was troubled, *Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3.* and yet she is not driven off by the disappointment from the use of further means: she resolves, *I will rise now*, I will not lie here if I cannot find my beloved here, nor be content if he be withdrawn. I will rise now without delay, and seek him presently, lest he withdraw further from me: those that would seek Christ to us to find him, must lose no time. I will rise out of a warm bed, and go out in a cold dark night in quest of my beloved. Those that seek Christ must not shrink or startle at difficulties: *I will rise and go about the city*, the holy city, in the streets, and the broad ways, for she knew he was not to be found in any blind bye-ways: we must seek in the city, in Jerusalem, which was a type of the gospel church. The likeliest place to find Christ is in the temple, *Luke ii. 46.* in the streets of the gospel church, in holy ordinances, where the children of Zion pass and repairs at all hours. She had a good purpose when she said, *I will arise now*, but the good performance was all in all; she rose and sought him. Those that are in pursuit of Christ, the knowledge of him, and communion with him must turn every stone, seek every where, and yet she found him not; she was still unsatisfied, uneasy, as Job when he looked on all sides, but could not perceive any tokens of the divine favour, *Job xxiv. 8, 9.* and the Psalmist often, when he complained that God hid his face from him, *Psal. lxxxviii. 14.* We may be in the way of our duty; and yet may miss of comfort, for the wind bloweth where it listeth. How heavy is the accent on this repeated complaint. I sought him, but I found him not; like that of Mary Magdalen, they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him, *John xx. 13.*

3. How she enquired of the watchmen concerning him, *ver. 3.* In the night the watchmen go about the city, for the preservation of its peace and safety, to guide and assist the honest and quiet, as well as to be a check upon those that are disorderly; these met her in her walks, and she asked them if they could give her any tidings of her beloved. In the streets and broad ways of Jerusalem she might meet with enough to divert her from her pursuit, and to entertain her, though she could not meet her beloved; but she regards none in comparison with him. Gracious souls press through crowds of other delights and contentments in pursuit of Christ, whom they prefer before their chief joy. Mary Magdalen sees angels in the sepulchre, but that will not do, unless she sees Jesus. Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Note, We must evidence the sincerity of our love to Christ by our solicitous enquiries about him. The children of the bride-chamber will mourn, when the bridegroom is taken away, *Matt. ix. 15.* especially for the sin which provoked him to withdraw; and if we do so, we will be careful to recover the sense of his favour, and diligent and constant in the use of proper means; in order thereunto we must search the scriptures, be much in prayer, keep close to ordinances, and all this upon our heart, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* those only who have seen Christ themselves, are like to direct others to a sight of him. When the Greeks came to worship at the feast, they applied themselves to Philip, with such an address as this of the spouse to the watchmen, *Sir, We would see Jesus*, *John xii. 21.*

4. How she found him at last, *ver. 4.* She passed from the watchmen as soon as she perceived they could give her no tidings of her beloved; she would not stay with them, because he was not among them, but went on seeking; for, As Ainsworth observes, neither the society of brethren, or church, or ministers, can comfort the afflicted conscience, unless Christ himself be apprehended by faith. But presently after she parted from the watchmen she found him whom she sought, and then called him, *him whom my soul loveth*, with as much delight as before with desire. Note, Those that continue seeking Christ shall find him at last, and when perhaps they were almost ready to despair of finding him. See *Psal. xlii. 7, 8.* *lxxvii. 9, 10.* *Isa. liv. 7, 8.* Disappointments must not drive us away from gracious pursuits, hold out faith and patience, the vision is but for an appointed time, and though the watchmen can give us no account of it, at the end it shall itself speak and not lie; and the comfort that comes in after long waiting, in the use of means, will be so much the sweeter at last.

5. How close she kept to him when she had found him; she is now as much in fear of losing him, as before she was in care to find him. I held him, held him fast, as the women when they met with Christ after his resurrection, held him by the feet and worshipped him, *Math. xxviii. 9.* I would not let him go. Not only I would never do any thing to provoke him to depart, but I would by faith and prayer prevail with him to stay, and by the exercise of grace preserve inward peace. Those that know how hard comfort is come by, and how dear it is bought, will be afraid of forfeiting it, and playing it away, and will think nothing too much to do to keep it safe. *Non minor est virtus quam quærire parta tueri.* Those that have laid hold of wisdom, must retain her, *Prov. iii. 19.* Those that hold Christ fast in the arms of faith and love shall not let him go, he will abide with them.

6. How desirous she was to bring others acquainted with him: *I brought him to my mother's house*, that all my relations, all that are dear to me, might have the benefit of communion with him. When Zaccheus found Christ, or rather was found of him, *salvation came to his house*, Luke xix. 9. Wherever we find Christ we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and we should be concerned for her interests, that she may have Christ present with her, and be earnest in prayer for his presence with his people and ministers always. They that enjoy the tokens of Christ's favour to their own souls, should desire that the church, and all religious assemblies in their public capacity, might likewise enjoy the tokens of his favour.

7. What care she was in that no disturbance might be given him, *ver. 5.* she repeats the charge she had before given, *chap. ii. 7.* to the *daughters of Jerusalem*, not to stir up, or awake her love. When she had brought him into her mother's house, among her sisters, she gives them a strict charge to keep all quiet, and in good order; to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid of offending him: The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the angel of the covenant that was among them explains this, *Exod. xxiii. 21.* *Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: See that none of you stir out of your places, lest you disturb him, but with quietness work and mind your own business: make no noise, let all clamour and bitterness be put far from you, for that grieves the holy Spirit of God,* Eph. iv. 30, 31. Some make this here to be Christ's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, not to disturb or disquiet his church, nor trouble the minds of the disciples; for Christ is very tender of the peace of his church, and all the members of it, even the little ones, and those that trouble them *shall bear their judgment*, Gal. v. 10.

6. ¶ Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh, and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

These are the words of the *daughters of Jerusalem*, to whom the charge was given, *ver. 5.* They had looked thily upon the bride, because she was black, *chap. i. 6.* but now they admire her, and speak of her with great respect: *Who is this?* how beautiful doth she look? who would have expected such a comely and magnificent person to come out of the wilderness? As when Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem, they said, *Who is this?* And of the accession of strangers to the church, she herself saith with wonder, *Isai. lxix. 21.* *Who has begotten me these?*

1. This is applicable to the Jewish church, when, after forty years wandering in the wilderness, they came out of it to take a glorious possession of the land of promise; and this may very well be illustrated by what Balaam said of them at that time when they ascended out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, and he stood admiring them, *from the top of the rocks I see him: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* Numb. xxiii. 9. xxiv. 5.

2. It is applicable to any public deliverance of the church of God, as particularly out of Babylon, the Old Testament, and the New Testament Babylon: then the church is like pillars of smoke, ascending upwards in devout affections, and the incense of praise to God, from which as from Noah's sacrifice, he smells a sweet savour: then she is amiable in the eyes of her friends, and her enemies too cannot but have a veneration for her, and worship at her feet, knowing that God has loved her, *Rev. iii. 9.* Sometimes the fear of the Jews was upon their neighbours, when they saw that God was with them of a truth, *Esth. viii. 17.*

3. It is applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency. 1. She ascends out of the wilderness, the dry and barren land, where there is no way, where there is no water, where travellers are still in want, and ever at a loss; here a poor soul may long be left to wander, but shall come up at last under the conduct of the Comforter. 2. She comes up like pillars of smoke, like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar, or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This intimates a fire of pious and devout affections in the soul, from whence this smoke ariseth, and the mounting of the soul heaven-wards in this smoke, as *Judges xiii. 23.* the heart lifted up to God in the heavens, *as the sparks fly upwards:* Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion, and its communion with God is most reviving when it ascends out of a wilderness. 3. She is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, she is replenished with the graces of God's Spirit, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense, which being now kindled by his gracious returns, sends forth a very fragrant smell, her devotions be now more than ordinarily lively, she is not only acceptable to God, but amiable in the eyes of others also, who are ready to cry out with admiration, *Who is this?* What a monument of mercy is this! The graces and comfort with which she is perfumed, are called the powders of the merchant, for they are far fetched and dear bought, by our Lord Jesus, that blessed merchant who took a long voyage, and was at vast expence, no less than that of his own blood, to purchase them for us: They are not the products of our own soul, nor the growth of our own country: no, they are imported from the heavenly Canaan, the better country.

7. Behold, his bed, which is Solomon's, threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. 8. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. 9. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. 10. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple; the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. 11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The daughters of Jerusalem stood admiring the spouse, and commending her, but she overlooks their praises, is not puffed up with them, but transfers all the glory to Christ, and directs them to look off her to him, recommends him to their esteem, and sets herself to applaud him. Here he is three times called Solomon, and we have that name but three times besides in all this song, *chap. i. 5. vi. 11, 12.* It is Christ that is here meant, who is greater than Solomon, and of whom Solomon was an illustrious type for his wisdom and wealth, and especially his building the temple.

Three things she admires him for:

1. The safety of his bed, *ver. 7.* Behold his bed, even Solomon's, very rich and fine, for so the curtains of Solomon were. His bed, which is above Solomon's, to some read it: Christ's bed, though he had not where to lay his

head, is better than Solomon's best bed: The church is his bed, for he hath said of it, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.* The hearts of believers are his bed, for he lies all night between their breasts, *Eph. iii. 17.* Heaven is his bed, the rest into which he entered when he had done his work. Or, it may be meant of that sweet repose and satisfaction which gracious souls enjoy in communion with him; it is called his bed, because though we are admitted to it, and therefore it is called our bed, *chap. i. 16.* yet it is his peace that is our rest, *John xiv. 27.* *I will give you rest,* Matt. xi. 28. It is Solomon's bed, whose name signifies peace, because in his days Judah and Israel dwelt safely under their vines and fig-trees.

That which she admires his bed for, is the guard that surrounded it; they that rest in Christ not only dwell at ease, many do so who yet are in the greatest danger, but they dwell in safety; their holy serenity is under the protection of a holy security; this bed has threescore valiant men about it, as yeomen of the guard, or the band of gentlemen pensioners, they are of the valiant of Israel, and a great many bold and brave men David's reign had produced; the life guard-men are well armed, they all hold swords, and know how to hold them, they are expert in war, well skilled in all the arts of it; they are posted about the bed at a convenient distance, they are in a posture of defence, every man with his sword upon his thigh, and his hand upon his sword, ready to draw upon the first alarm, and this, because of fear in the night, because of the danger feared, for the lives of princes, even the wisest and best, as they are more precious, so they are more exposed, and require to be more guarded, than the lives of common persons: Or, because of the fear of it, and the apprehension which the spouse may have of danger, these guards are set for her satisfaction, that she may be quiet from the fear of evil, which believers themselves are subject to, especially in the night, when they are under a cloud as to their spiritual state, or in any outward trouble more than ordinary. Christ himself was under the special protection of his Father in his whole undertaking; in the shadow of his hand has he hid me, *Isa. xlix. 2.* he had legions of angels at his command. The church is well guarded, more are with her than against her; lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day, *Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.* particularly believers, when they repose themselves in Christ, and with him, though it may be night time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, yet they are as safe, as safe as Solomon himself in the midst of his guards; the angels have a charge concerning them, ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, and they ought to be valiant men, expert in the spiritual warfare, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that girt upon their thigh, always ready to them for the silencing of the fears of God's people in the night. All the attributes of God are engaged for the safety of believers, they are kept as in a strong hold by his power, *1 Pet. i. 4.* are safe in his name, *Prov. xviii. 10.* his peace protects those in whom it rules, *Phil. iv. 7.* and the effect of righteousness in them is quietness and assurance, *Isa. xxxii. 17.* Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

2. The splendor of his chariot, *ver. 9, 10.* As Christ and believers rest in safety under a sufficient guard, so when they appear publicly, as kings in their coaches of state, they appear in great magnificence. This chariot was of Solomon's own contriving and making, the materials very rich, silver and gold, and cedar, and purple: he made it for himself, and yet made it for the daughters of Jerusalem, to oblige them. Some by this chariot, or coach, or chaise, (the word is no where else used in scripture) understand the human nature of Christ, in which the divine nature rode as in a chariot; it was a divine workmanship; a body hast thou prepared me; the structure was very fine, but that which was at the bottom of it was love, pure love, to the children of men. Others make it to represent the everlasting gospel, in which as in an open chariot Christ shews himself, and as in a chariot of war, rides forth triumphantly, conquering and to conquer. The pillars, the seven pillars (*Prov. ix. 1.*) are of silver, for the words of the Lord are as silver tried, *Psal. xii. 7.* nay, they are better than thousands of gold and silver; it is hung with purple, a princely colour, all the adornings of it are dyed in the precious blood of Christ, and that gives them this colour; but that which completes the glory of it is love, it is paved with love, it is lined with love, not love of strangers, as Solomon's was in the days of his defection, but love of the daughters of Jerusalem, a holy love. Silver it better than cedar, gold better than silver, but love is better than gold, better than all, and it is put last, for nothing can be better than that. That gospel is all love.

Mr. Durham applies it to the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the scripture: This is that work of Christ himself, wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners doth most eminently appear, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers; in this covenant love is conveyed to them, and they are carried in it to the perfection of love, and as it were, ride in triumph: It is admirably framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ, and for the comfort of believers; it is well ordered in all things, and sure, *2 Sam. xxii. 5.* it has pillars that cannot be shaken. It is made of the wood of Lebanon, which can never rot, the basis of it is gold, the most lasting metal; the blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and forms of divine wrath, and the troubles of this world; but the midst of it, and that which is all in all in it, is love, that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and the dimensions of which are unmeasurable.

3. The lustre of his royal person, when he appears in his greatest pomp, *ver. 11.* Here observe,

(1.) The call that is given to the daughters of Zion, to acquaint themselves with the glories of king Solomon: Go forth and behold him. The multitude of the spectators adds to the beauty of a splendid cavalcade; Christ in his gospel manifests himself, let each of us add to the number of those that give honour to him, by giving themselves the satisfaction of looking upon him. Who should pay respect to Zion's king, but Zion's daughters? they have reason to rejoice greatly when he comes, *Zech. ix. 9.* 1. Behold him then; look with pleasure upon Christ in his glory; look upon him with an eye of faith, with a fixed eye; here is a sight worth seeing; behold, and admire him, behold, and love him; look upon him, and know him again.

2. Go forth, and behold him, go off from the world, as those that see no beauty and excellency in it, in comparison with what is to be seen in the Lord Jesus: Go out of yourselves, and let the sight of his transcendent beauty put you out of conceit with yourselves: Go forth to the place where he is to be seen, to the street through which he passeth, as Zaccheus.

(2.) The direction that is given them what they should take special notice of, as that which they would not see every day, and that was his crown, either the crown of gold adorned with jewels, which he wore on his coronation-day, Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, though she did not procure that for him, yet by seasonable interposal, she helped to secure it to him when Adonijah was catching at it; or the garland, or crown of flowers and green tied with ribbons, which his mother made for him, to adorn the solemnity of his nuptials: Perhaps Solomon's coronation-day was his marriage day, the days of his espousals, when the garland his mother crowned him with

with was added to the crown his people crowned him with. Applying this to Christ, it speaks, 1. The many honours put upon him, and the power and dominion he is entrusted with. *Go forth*, and see king Jesus, *with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him*, when he declared him his *beloved Son*, in whom he was *well pleased*; when he set him as *King upon his holy hill of Zion*; when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in *heaven and in earth*, and put all things under his feet. 2. The dishonour put upon him by his persecutors: Some apply it to the *crown of thorns*, with which his mother, the Jewish church, crowned him, on the day of his death, which was the day of his espousals to his church, when he loved it and gave himself for it, Eph. v. 25. and it is observable, that when he was brought forth wearing the crown of thorns, Pilate said, and said it to the daughters of Zion, *Behold the man*. 3. It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, as his mother, and by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, *These are my mother, and sister, and brother*, Matt. xii. 50. They gave him the glory of his undertaking, to him his glory in the church, Eph. iii. 21. When believers accept of him as theirs, and join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant. (1.) It is his coronation day in their souls; before conversion they were crowning themselves, but then they begin to crown Christ, and continue to do so from that day forward: they appoint him their head, they bring every thought into obedience to him; they set up his throne in their hearts, and cast all their crowns at his feet. (2.) It is the day of his espousals, in which he betroths them to him for ever in loving kindness and in mercies, joins them to himself in faith and love, and gives himself to them in the promises and all he hath to be theirs: *Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee*, Hos. iii. 3. and to him they are presented as *chaste virgins*. (3.) It is the day of the gladness of his heart; he is pleased with the honour that his people do him, pleased with the progress of his interest among them: *Doth Satan fall before them? In that hour Jesus rejoiceth in spirit*, Luke x. 18—21. There is joy in heaven over repenting sinners: the family is glad when the prodigal son returns. *Go forth, and behold Christ's grace towards sinners, as his crown, his brightest glory*.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter. 1. Jesus Christ having espoused his church to himself, (chap. iii. 11.) highly commends her beauty in the several instances of it, concluding her fair, all fair, ver. 1—5. and again, ver. 7. 2. He retires himself, and invites her with him, from the mountains of terror to those of delight, ver. 6—8. 3. He professeth his love to her, and his delight in her affection to him, ver. 9—14. 4. She ascribes, all she had that was valuable in her to him, and depends upon the continued influence of his grace, to make her more and more acceptable to him, ver. 15, 16.

1. **BEHOLD**, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead. 2. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even thorn, which came up from the washing: whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks. 4. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. 5. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. 6. Until the day-break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. 7. Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.

Here is, (1.) A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting in the beauty of holiness. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, and what all must subscribe to, he hath said, *Behold thou art fair*. She had commended him and called all about her to take notice of his glories, and hereby she recommends herself to him, gains his favour, and in return for her respects he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ, he will honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30. He doth not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself, or to court her praises of him; but, 1. It is to encourage her under her present dejections; whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes. 2. It is to teach her what to value herself by, not any external advantages which would add nothing to her, nor the want of them deprive her of any thing that was really excellent, but by the comeliness of grace which he had put upon her. 3. It is to invite others to think well of her too; and to join themselves to her. Thou art my love, thou lovest me, and art loved of me, and therefore thou art fair; all the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light: It is the beauty of our Lord God that is upon us, Psal. xc. 17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. *Uxor fulgit radiis mariti*. It is repeated, *thou art fair*, and again, *thou art fair*, noting not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it.

As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades strong, and the comparisons bold; not proper indeed to represent the external beauty; for they were not designed to do so, but the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible. Seven particulars are instanced in, a number of perfection, for the church is enriched with manifold graces, by the seven spirits that are before the throne, Rev. i. 4. 1 Cor. i. 5—7.

1. Her eyes; a good eye contributes much to a beauty: *thou hast doves eyes*, clear and chaste, and often cast up towards heaven: It is not the eagle's eye, that can face the sun, but the dove's eye, a humble, modest, mournful eye; that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church's eye, Isa. liii. 8. *Thy watchman shall see eye to eye*, they must be like doves eyes, harmless and inoffensive, Mart. x. 16. having their conversation in the world, in simplicity and godly sincerity. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man, they must be clear but not haughty, not exercised in things too high for us. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have doves eyes; when we look not unto idols, Ezek. xviii. 6. but have our eyes ever towards the Lord, Psal. xxv. 15. The doves eyes are within the locks, which are as a shade upon them, so that, (1.) They

cannot fully see; as long as we are here in this world, we know but in part; for one hair hangs in our eyes, we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness; death will shortly cut off those locks, and then we shall see all things clearly. (2.) They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander, but limits them with her locks.

2. Her hair; it is compared to a flock of goats, which looked white, and were on the top of the mountains like a fine head of hair; and the sight was the more pleasant to the spectator, because the goats have not only gravity from their beards, but they are comely in going, Prov. xxx. 31. but it was most pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ puts a value upon that in the church and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair: he told his disciples the very hair of their heads were all numbered, as carefully as men number their flocks, Matt. x. 30. and that not a hair of their head should perish, Luke xxi. 18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart: the apostle opposeth good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1 Tim. ii. 2, 10. Mary Magdalen's hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.

3. Her teeth, ver. 2. Ministers are the church's teeth, that as nurses, chew the meat for the babes of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the priests and Levites, who fed upon the sacrifices as the representatives of the people. Faith, by which we feed upon Christ, meditation, by which we ruminate on the word, and chew the cud upon what we have heard, in order to the digestion of it, are the teeth of the new man. These are here compared to a flock of sheep; Christ called his disciples and ministers a little flock. It is the praise of teeth to be even, to be white, and kept clean, like sheep from the washing, and to be firm and well fixed in the gums, and not like sheep that cast their young: for so the word signifies, which we translate barren. It is the praise of ministers to be even in mutual love and concord, to be pure and clean from all moral pollutions, and to be fruitful, bringing forth souls to Christ, and nursing his lambs.

4. Her lips: these are compared to a thread of scarlet, ver. 3. red lips are comely and a sign of health, as the paleness of the lips is a sign of faintness and weakness; her lips were of the colour of scarlet, but thin lips, like a thread of scarlet; the next words explain it: *thy speech is comely*, always with grace, good, and to the use of edifying, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with our lips, and with the mouth make confession of him to himself, then they are as a thread of scarlet: All our good works and good words must be washed in the blood of Christ, dyed like the scarlet thread, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel on the day of atonement.

5. Her temples or cheeks, which are here compared to a piece of pomegranate, fruits, which when cut in two, have red veins or streaks in them, like a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up our faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin, and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ's bride are within her locks, which intimates (saith Mr. Durham) that the blushes when no other sees, and for that which none sees, but God and conscience; also that the cheeks not to proclaim her humility, but modestly covers that too, yet the evidences of all these in a tender walk appear and are comely.

6. Her neck: this is here compared to the tower of David, ver. 4. this is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck; this is like the tower of David, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially bucklers and shields, as the soldiers were supplied with them out of that tower; for faith is our shield, Eph. vi. 16. they that have it never want a buckler, for God will compass them with his favour as with a shield. When this neck is like a tower, straight and stately, and strong, a Christian goes on in his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and doth not hang a drooping head, as he doth when faith fails. Some make the shields of the mighty men, that are here said to hang up in the tower of David, to be the monuments of the valour of David's worthies; their shields were preserved to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating, that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have done and won by faith. In Heb. xi. we have the shields of the mighty men hung up, the exploits of believers, and the trophies of their victories.

7. Her breasts: these are like two young roes that are twins, ver. 5. The church's breasts are both for ornament, Ezek. xvi. 7. and for use, they are the breasts of her consolation, Isa. lxvi. 11. as she is said to suck the breasts of kings, Isa. lx. 16. Some apply these to the two Testaments; others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; others to the ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God, and to give out to them the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby; and, in order to that, are themselves to feed among the lilies where Christ feeds, chap. ii. 16. that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as the tender husband is with the affections of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe, because her breasts satisfy him at all times, Prov. v. 19. This includes also his edifying others, and communicating grace to them, which adds much to a Christian's beauty.

(2.) The Bridegroom's resolution hereupon to retire to the mountain of myrrh, ver. 6. and there to make his residence. This mountain of myrrh is supposed to signify the mount Moriah on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God; Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church, that he chooseth this to be his rest for ever, here he will dwell till the day breaks, and the shadows flee away. Christ's parting promise to his disciples, as the representatives of the church, answers to this: *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*. Where the ordinances of God are duly administered, there Christ will be, and there we must meet him at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and sufficient succour and relief in all her trials, and there to cast anchor and with for the day which, at the time appointed, would break, and the shadows flee away. The holy hill (as some observe) is here called both a mountain of myrrh, which is bitter, and a hill of frankincense, which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice: repentance is a bitter sweet, but in heaven it will be all frankincense and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to incense, and Christ will meet his praying people, and will bless them.

(3.) His repeated commendation of the beauty of his spouse, ver. 7. *Thou art all fair, my love*: He had said, ver. 1, *Thou art fair*, but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounceth all very good. *Thou art all fair, my love*, i. e. thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thou hast all beauties

beauties in thee; thou art sanctified wholly in every part, all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. there is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; there is no spot in thee as far as thou art renewed; the spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish; there is no spot but such as is often the spot of God's children, none of the leopard's spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 25.

8. ¶ Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amanah, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. 2. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. 10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love, than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! 11. Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb: honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. 12. A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, camphire, with spikenard. 14. Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her and affection to her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delights he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loveth the church, and takes pleasure in it, as if it were spotless and had no fault, when yet it is compassed with infirmity.

Now observe here,

1. The endearing names and titles by which he calls her to express his love to her, to allure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her *my spouse*, ver. 8—11. and three times *my sister, my spouse*, ver. 9, 10—12. Mention was made, chap. iii. 11. of the day of his espousals, and a ter that she is called his *spouse*, not before. Note, There is a marriage covenant between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his *spouse*, and his calling her so makes her so. I have betrothed thee unto me for ever; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. He is not ashamed to own the relation, but, as becomes a kind and tender husband, he speaks lovingly to her, and calls her his *spouse*, which cannot but strongly engage her to be faithful to him: Nay, because no one relation among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and to shew that all this must be understood spiritually, he owns her in two relations, which among men are incompatible, *my sister, my spouse*: Abraham's saying of Sarah, *she is my sister*, was interpreted a denying of her to be his wife, but Christ's church is to him both a *sister* and a *spouse*, as Matt. xii. 50. a *sister* and *mother*. His calling her *sister* is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in his incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification: He clothed himself with a *body*, Heb. ii. 14. and he clothes believers with his *Spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. and so they become his *sisters*: They are children of God his Father, 2 Cor. vi. 18. and so they become his *sisters*: he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. ii. 11. and he owns them and loves them as his *sisters*.

2. The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that must forget her own people and her father's house, and leave all to cleave to him. *Ubi tu Cuius, ibi ego Cuius. Come with me from Lebanon*, ver. 8.

It is (1.) a precept, so we take it, like that, chap. ii. 10—13. *Rise up, and come away*. All that are by faith come to Christ, must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him and compliance with him: Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily, *Come with me, my spouse*: come with me to God as a father, come with me on-wards, heavenwards, come forward with me, come up with me: *Come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amanah, from the lion's den*. These mountains are to be considered, 1. As seemingly delightful places: Lebanon is called that *goodly mountain*, Deut. iii. 25. We read of the *glory of Lebanon*, Isa. xxxv. 2. and its goodly smell, Hos. xiv. 6. We read of the pleasant dews of Hermon, Psal. cxxxiii. 3. and the joy of Hermon, Psal. lxxxix. 12. and we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones: and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures; to sit loose to all the delights of sense: all those must do so that would come with Christ; they must take their affections off from all present things, yea, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on the top of Amanah, and the top of Shenir, though they enjoy the highest satisfaction the creature can propose to give, yet they must *come away* from them all, and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth that they may have their conversation in heaven. *Come from those mountains that go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountains of myrrh*, ver. 6. Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look from them, look above them; Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills? No; our help cometh from the Lord, Psal. cxxi. 1, 2. We must look beyond them to the things that are not seen (as these high hills are) that are eternal. *From the tops of Shenir and Hermon*, which were on the other side Jordan, as from Pisgah, they could see the land of Canaan; from this world we must look forward to the better country. 2. They are to be considered as really dangerous; these hills indeed are pleasant enough, but there are in them *lion's dens*; they are mountains of the leopards, mountains of prey, though they seem glorious and excellent, Psalm lxxxv. 4. Satan, that *roaring lion*, is the prince of this world, in the things of it he lies in wait to devour; on the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those who take up their residence in them, and therefore *come with me from them*; let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and then they can do us no hurt; *Come with me from the temples of idolaters*, and the societies of wicked people, so some understand it; *come out from among them, and be ye separate*: Come from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as *lions and leopards*, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.

(2.) It may be taken as a promise; *thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lion's den*; that is, 1. Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon in the north, Amanah in the west, Hermon in the east, Shenir in the south; from

all parts, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Matt. viii. 11. See Isa. xlix. 11, 12. Some from the tops of these mountains, some of the great and topping men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ. 2. The church shall be delivered from her persecutors in due time: Though now she dwells among lions, Psalm lviii. 4. Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

3. The great delight Christ takes in his church and in all believers. He delights in them,

(1.) As in an agreeable bride, adorned for her husband, Rev. xxi. 2. who greatly desires her beauty, Psalm xlv. 11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love, his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. A spouse so dearly bought and paid for could not but be dearly loved; such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that love in which he gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Observe,

1. How he is affected towards his spouse, *thou hast ravished my heart*; the word is used only here, *thou hast hearted me*, or *thou hast unhearted me*. New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church: and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, being so much in love with one object as to be heartless to every thing else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the chosen remnant before the worlds were, when his delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31. that first love which brought him from heaven to earth to seek and save them at such vast expence, yet including the complacency he takes in them when he brought them to himself. Note, Christ's heart is upon his church; so it has appeared all along; his treasure is in it, it is his peculiar treasure, Exod. xix. 5. and therefore there his heart is also. "Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself, when he emptied himself of his glory, and despised all shame and pain for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross;" so Bishop Reynolds here. Thus let us love him.

4. What it is that thus affects him with delight.

1. The regard she has to him, *thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes*, those *dove's eyes*, clear and chaste, which were commended, ver. 11. with one glance of those eyes. Christ is wonderfully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him, above any rival whatsoever, and whose eyes are even towards him; he is soon aware of the first look of a soul towards him, and meets it with his favours.

2. The ornament she has from him; that is, the obedience she yields to him, for that is the chain of her neck, the graces that enrich her soul, which are connected as links in a chain; the exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ which she professeth to believe, as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality, and an entire submission to the commanding power of his law, and the constraining power of his love; having shaken off the bands of our neck, by which we were tied to this world, Isa. iii. 2. and the yoke of our transgressions, we are bound with the cords of love, as chains of gold, to Jesus Christ, and our necks brought under his sweet and easy yoke to draw in it; this recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which in his account is an ornament of grace unto the head, and chains about the neck, Prov. i. 9.

3. The affection she has for him, *how fair is thy love! how beautiful is it! not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its workings in the heart, its works in the life*. How well doth it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure doth Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ so as this doth. *How much better is thy love than wine!* than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink-offerings; hence the fruit of the vine is said to cheer God and man, Judges ix. 13. She had said of Christ's love, it is better than wine, chap. i. 2. and now Christ saith so of hers; there is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behind hand with his friends in kindness.

4. The ointments, the odours wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God, Phil. iv. 18. The smell of thine ointments is better than all spices, such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them, 1 Kings x. 2. or rather than all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar; love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense: The smell of her garments too, the visible profession she makes of religion and relation to Christ before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as the smell of Lebanon. Christ having put upon his spouse the white raiment of his own righteousness, Rev. iii. 18. and the righteousness of saints, Rev. xix. 9. and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it.

5. Her words, both in her devotions to God and her discourses with men, ver. 11. Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully: If what God speaks to us be sweeter to us than the honey and the honey-comb, Psalm xix. 10. what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him, sweet is thy voice: And if out of a good treasure in the heart we bring forth good things, if our speech be always with grace, if our lips use knowledge aright, if they disperse knowledge, they then in Christ's account even drop the honey-comb, out-drop it. Honey and milk (the two staple commodities of Canaan) are under thy tongue, i. e. in thy heart; not only reserved there for thy own use as a sweet moriel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is a sweet and wholesome nourishment, milk for babes, honey for those that are grown up, Christ is well pleased with those that are full of his word.

(2.) As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocency was represented by the putting of him in a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, ver. 12, 13, 14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which as usual had a fountain in it; where Solomon made him gardens and orchards, he made him pools of water, Eccl. ii. 5, 6. not only for curiosity and diversion in water-works, but for use to water the gardens; Eden was well watered, Gen. ii. 10—xiii. 10. Observe,

1. The peculiarity of this garden, it is a garden enclosed; a paradise separated from the common earth; it is appropriated to God, he hath set it apart for himself: Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance: It is inclosed for secrecy, the saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not; Christ walks in his garden unseen: It is inclosed for safety, a hedge of protection is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in: God's vineyard is fenced, Isa. v. 2. there